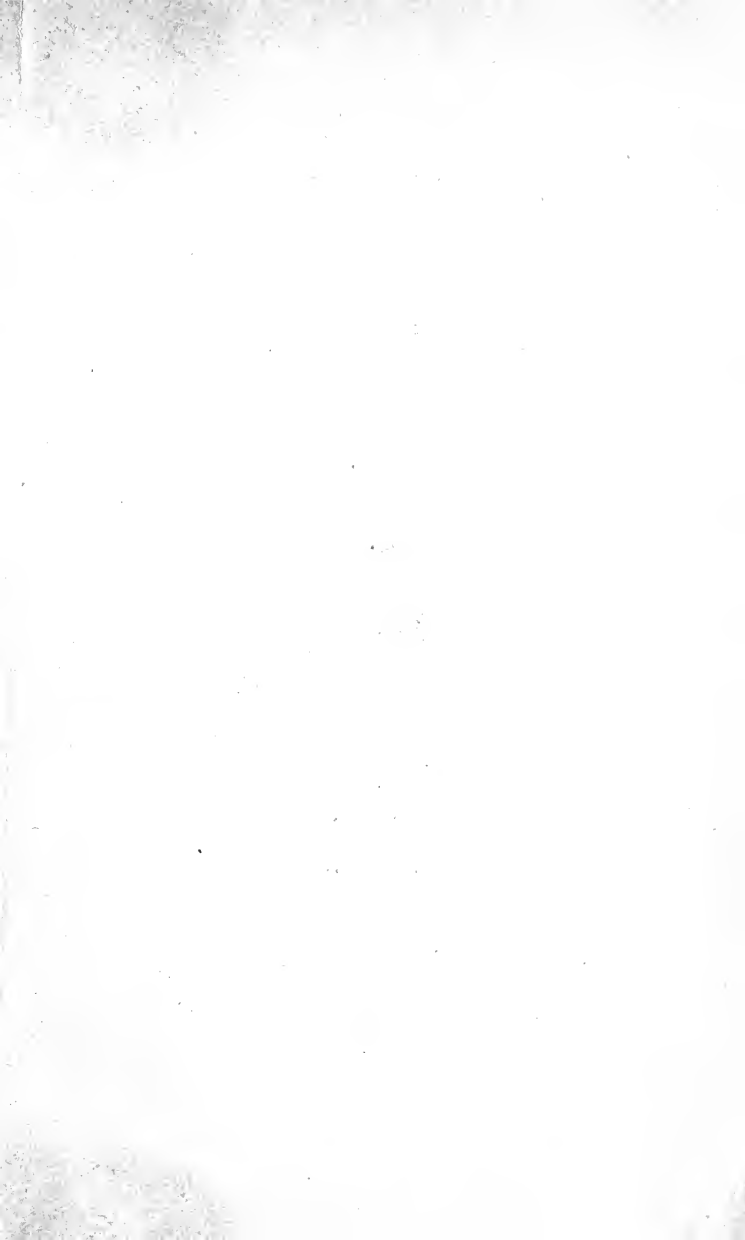






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THE BOOK OF PSALMS.



THE  
BOOK OF PSALMS.

*A NEW TRANSLATION.*

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES

FOR ENGLISH READERS.

BY

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## PREFACE.

IN deference to the suggestions which he has received from many quarters, the Author has consented to the publication of a popular Edition of his work on the Psalms. The great bulk of the critical matter contained in the original work has been omitted in this ; but in other respects little change has been made either in the text or in the notes. It is hoped that in its present form the book may be more accessible to many English readers, and that it will help to the more accurate understanding of this most important portion of Holy Scripture.

A. M. P.

CAMBRIDGE, *December 6*, 1876.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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### POETRY OF THE HEBREWS.

THE Poetry of the Hebrews is mainly of two kinds, lyrical and didactic. They have no epic, and no drama. Dramatic elements are to be found in many of their odes, and the book of Job and the Song of Songs have sometimes been called divine dramas ; but dramatic poetry, in the proper sense of that term, was altogether unknown to the Israelites. The remains of their lyric poetry which have been preserved—with one marked exception, the lament of David over Saul and Jonathan—are almost entirely of a religious character, and were designed chiefly to be set to music, and to be sung in the public services of the sanctuary. The earliest specimen of purely lyrical poetry which we possess, is the Song of Moses on the overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea. It is the worthy expression of a nation's joy at being delivered, by the outstretched arm of Jehovah, from the hand of their oppressors. It is the grandest ode to liberty which was ever sung : and it is this, because its homage is rendered, not to some ideal spirit of liberty deified by a people in the moment of that passionate and frantic joy which follows the successful assertion of their independence, but because it is a thanksgiving to Him who is the one only Giver of victory and of freedom. Both in form and

spirit it possesses the same characteristics which stamp all the later Hebrew poetry. Although without any regular strophical division, it has the chorus, "Sing ye to Jehovah, for He hath triumphed gloriously," &c. It was sung evidently in antiphonal measure, chorus answering to chorus and voice to voice; it was sung accompanied by dancing, and to the music of the maidens playing upon the timbrels. Such is its form. In its spirit, it is like all the national songs of the people, a hymn sung to the glory of Jehovah. No word celebrates the prowess of the armies of Israel or of their leaders. "Thy right hand, O Jehovah, is become glorious in power; Thy right hand, O Jehovah, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." Thus it commemorates that wonderful victory, and thus it became the pattern after which all later odes of victory were written. The people from whom such poetry could spring, at so early a period of their history, could not have been the rude ignorant horde which some writers delight to represent them; they must have made large use of Egyptian culture, and in these respects, in poetry and music, must have far surpassed their Egyptian masters.

Some fragments of poetry belong to the narrative of the wanderings in the wilderness (see Numbers vi. 24, 26, and xxi. 17, 18). One grand relic of that time has been preserved to us. The 90th Psalm is "the Prayer of Moses, the man of God," written evidently towards the close of the forty years' wandering in the desert. As we might expect, the stormy period which followed the first occupation of Canaan was not favourable to poetry: but there is one song of that time which breathes all the glow of fervent patriotism and genuine poetic inspiration—the stirring Ode of the prophetess Deborah.

But the great era of lyric poetry begins with David. Gifted with the highest inspiration of a poet, and finely skilled in the minstrel's art, he stands foremost in the goodly company of Hebrew bards. His solitary life in early youth, tending his father's flock amidst the picturesque scenery and lonely



mountains of Judea, fostered his natural taste, whilst constant and loving intercourse with his God elevated and ennobled it. We may see in his early poems, in all its freshness and originality, that intense love of nature and nature's God which in after years, amid all the trying vicissitudes of his life, ripened into the strong love of the man for all that is true and pure, and hatred of all deceit and impurity, combined with an almost childlike simplicity of faith and trust in God.

As we might expect, so great a poet had many imitators. His chief musicians, fired with their royal master's poetic fervour, composed psalms almost equal to those of David himself.

Under Solomon, religious poetry does not seem to have flourished. The age of poetry yielded to the wisdom of the *Mâshâl*, the proverb or parable. Solomon is said to have written a thousand and five songs (1 Kings iv. 32), but only two psalms, the 72nd and 127th, bear his name in the Hebrew titles, and it is doubtful whether he was the writer of either of them. Two other of the poetical books are ascribed to him, the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. The first of these is a graceful and highly-finished idyll, but Ecclesiastes is not a poem; it is the record of a long struggle with the perplexities, the doubts, the misgivings which must beset a man of large experience and large wisdom, who tries to read the riddle of the world before his heart has been chastened by submission, and his spirit elevated by trust in God.

From the days of Solomon till the Captivity, the cultivation of lyric poetry languished amongst the Hebrews, with two memorable exceptions. These were in the reigns of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah. Hezekiah, who has been termed the Pisistratus of the Hebrew history, established a society of learned men (Prov. xxv. 1), whose duty it was to provide for the collection and preservation of all the scattered remains of the earlier literature. The arrangement of some portion at least of the present Psalter, it may reasonably be supposed, was completed under their

superintendence. Smaller separate collections were combined into one ; and this was enriched partly by the discovery of older hymns and songs, and partly by the addition of new.

Hezekiah himself encouraged the taste for this kind of poetry by his own example. One plaintive strain of his, written on his recovery from sickness, has been preserved in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (chap. xxxviii.). In his reign were written a number of beautiful poems by the Korahite singers (see Psalms xlii. to xlix.). From this time till the return from the Captivity, comparatively few Psalms were written, though in one sense we may call the prophets psalmists. Jonah (chap. ii.), Isaiah (chap. xii.), Habakkuk (chap. iii.), were all lyric poets. Two Psalms (xxxii., lxxi.) have been supposed by eminent critics to have been written by Jeremiah. Some Psalms were written even in Babylon itself (see Psalms lxxiv., lxxix., cii.), and many more after the return from the Exile. We may therefore pronounce that the Psalms belong as a whole, not to many, but chiefly to two or three periods of Jewish history—to the age of David, to that of Hezekiah, to the return from the Babylonish Captivity. One portion of the Psalms belonging to the latter period (cxiii.—cxviii.), the “Hallél,” was sung at the great festivals in the Second Temple, at the Passover, at Pentecost, at the Feast of Tabernacles, and also at the Feast of Dedication and at the New Moons. This was, doubtless, “the hymn” which our Lord and His apostles are said to have sung at His last solemn Passover before He suffered. One more question remains. Are any of the Psalms later than the time of Ezra or Nehemiah? There is no certain ground for concluding that the Psalter was closed under Nehemiah, and there is no reason, so far as the history of the Canon is concerned, why we should refuse to admit the existence of Maccabean Psalms, but there are not more than two or three Psalms which can with any plausibility be brought down to so late a period : (see Introductions to Psalms xliv., lxxiv., lxxix.).

## THE INSCRIPTIONS OF THE PSALMS.

THE Inscriptions of the Psalms are chiefly of three kinds:—

- I. Those which mark their musical or liturgical character.
- II. Those which assign them to particular authors.
- III. Those which connect them with certain historical events.

Any of these may occur separately, or be combined to form one title.

I. We distinguish here between what may be called the Liturgical and the musical notices.

i. "For the Precentor," or leader of the Temple choir. E.V. "To the Chief Musician."

The title occurs fifty-five times in the Inscriptions. It probably means the leader of the band, or of the singers; or, in modern phrase, "The Choir-master."

In three Psalms (xxxix., lxii., lxxvii.) the name of Jeduthun (or Ethan) is added, who we know was one of David's choir-masters.

"For teaching," Ps. lx. This may perhaps intimate that the Psalm was intended to be taught publicly by the Levites to the people, but it may also mean that it was to be taught to the Levites themselves.

"To bring to remembrance," Ps. xxxviii. and lxx. In 1 Chron. xvi. 4 it is joined with "To give thanks and praise," as a part of the special duties of the Levites, who were set by David before

the Ark, and there it would seem to mean "to call to memory," so as to praise and celebrate the goodness of Jehovah. The expression may mean "A prayer to remind God of man."

ii. Notices of a musical kind.

"A Song" (*Shîr, Mizmor*). A Psalm properly as sung with instrumental accompaniment.

"Michtam." Perhaps a "Golden Poem;" or it may be connected with the Arabic verb "to hide," and so "a mystery," a song of deep import.

"Maschil." A "finely, skilfully constructed ode."

"Shiggaion." An "irregular or dithyrambic ode," from a Hebrew verb meaning "to wander." See Hab. iii.

"A Song of Loves," Ps. xlv.—a song, that is, the subject of which is love.

"Song of the Ascents." E.V. "Song of Degrees," Pss. cxx., cxxxiv. Various explanations have been given of this title, but the most probable explanation is, that they were songs composed for the "goings-up" to the yearly festivals at Jerusalem. Hence the title "Song of the Goings-up" = "A Pilgrim's Song." That the caravans "went up" with singing is evident from Is. xxx. 29. The allusions to the Exile are readily explained by the fact that these Psalms, or some of them, were composed for the pilgrimages to the Second Temple.

Some of the titles refer to the instruments by which the Psalm was to be accompanied—"to the flutes," "with stringed instruments," or "*upon* a stringed instrument." Others, again, refer to the measure, as "After the manner of maidens" (*Alamoth*), Ps. xlvi.; "Upon the octave (below)" (*Sheminith*), Pss. vi., xii.; see 1 Chron. xv. 20, 21. "Upon the Gittith," or as the form of the word seems to imply, "after the Gittith manner," or "manner of Gath," some particular measure or style of music which had been borrowed from the Philistines, and named after one of their chief cities.

“Upon, *i.e.* after the manner of Jeduthun,” one of the famous singers of David. Others of like import.

*Melodies denoted by Titles.*—Ps. xxii., “After the Song beginning Hind of the Dawn;” Ps. lvi., “The Silent Dove in far-off Lands,” or perhaps, “The Dove of the distant Terebinths;” “Destroy not,” Pss. lvii., lix., lxxv.: these being probably the first words of some well-known song. “After lilies, the testimony,” lxxx., or “After the lily of the testimony,” lx.; some would explain this of a lily-shaped instrument. “Death of the son,” Ps. ix., may denote that the Psalm was to be sung to an air beginning with the words “Death of the son.”

*Selah.*—It may be well to discuss this here, though it is not an inscription, but merely a musical sign. It is almost hopeless to attempt to give a satisfactory explanation of this word “Selah.” By the Targums, the Talmud, and Aquila it has been rendered “eternity,” because in Pss. lxi. 5 and lxxxix. 38 it seemed to stand parallel with “for ever;” by Ab. Ezra, “Amen;” by Gesenius, “pause, stillness, rest.” Others, again, would explain it in the sense of “elevation,” “lifting up,” whether of the voice or of the music. As, however, it is most frequently introduced at the end of a strophe, it would seem more probably to imply the intervention at the particular place of a musical symphony. This musical sign is clearly very ancient, inasmuch as it is found in all the old versions, and inasmuch as even then its meaning was matter of debate and uncertainty. (See Mr. Wright’s article in Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, where the various hypotheses are discussed.)

## II. Inscriptions which give us the name of the author.

1. *David.*—His name is prefixed to all the Psalms in the First Book with few exceptions, and to most of the Psalms in the second half of the Second Book. After this his name appears once in the Third Book, twice in the Fourth, and fifteen times in the Fifth. In all, therefore, he is said to have written

seventy-three Psalms. In two Psalms of the First Collection, the high title of "Servant of Jehovah" is added to his name.

2. *David's Singers*.—These appear in the Second and Third Books.

(a) *The Sons of Korah*.—Eleven Psalms are ascribed to them. They were one of the oldest Levitical families, long before the time of David, and related to the still more ancient family of Kohath, the son of Levi. In the time of David, Heman the son of Joel, a member of this family, became famed for his skill in music and song, and hence apparently the Korahites obtained the name of "singers" (2 Chron. xx. 19). Hence it is that in the Inscription of Ps. lxxxviii. we have first the general title assigning it to "the sons of Korah," and then the special assigning it to Heman.

(b) *Asaph*.—He is said to have written twelve Psalms. He is one of the three famous singers of David, and holds amongst them, indeed, the foremost place. In later times he alone ranks with David.

(c) *Ethan the Ezrahite*.—He is named only as the author of one Psalm, the Eighty-ninth. He is the third of David's great singers.

Besides the seventy-three Psalms of David, and twenty-three of his singers, we have, according to the Hebrew Inscriptions, two of Solomon's. One Psalm, the 90th, is attributed to Moses, "the man of God." About a third of the Psalms are anonymous.

III. The third class of notices is that which purports to give an account of the particular occasion for which a Psalm was composed.

We must not, in all cases, rely implicitly on the accuracy of these inscriptions; for we find them only prefixed to the Psalms of David, and then they mostly refer to events in David's life, as recorded in the historical books. (Compare Inscription of Psalm xxxiv. with 1 Sam. xxi. 14; that of Ps. lii. with 1 Sam.

xxii. 9; that of Ps. liv. with 1 Sam. xxiii. 19; that of Ps. lvi. with 1 Sam. xxi. 11—15.)

Some of these historical notices are, beyond all reasonable doubt, ancient and trustworthy; but of the majority of them we may conclude that they were added from time to time by different collectors. Some have evidently been derived from words or allusions in the Psalms; others from tradition, ascribing a particular Psalm to a particular author.

The conclusion, then, at which we arrive here is the same as in the case of the alleged authorship of certain Psalms. The Inscriptions cannot always be relied on. They are sometimes genuine, and really represent the most ancient tradition. At other times they are due to the caprice of later editors and collectors, the fruits of conjecture, or of dimmer and more uncertain traditions. In short, the Inscriptions of the Psalms are like the Subscriptions to the Epistles of the New Testament. They are not of any necessary authority, and their value must be weighed and tested by the usual critical processes.





# THE PSALMS.



## BOOK I.

PSALMS I.—XLI.



## PSALM I.

THIS Psalm seems to have been placed first in the collection, because, from its general character and subject, it formed a suitable introduction to the rest. The absence of any inscription, which is rare in the First Book, seems to indicate that the Psalm was from the first regarded in the light merely of an introduction originally to some older and smaller collection. In some MSS. it is not numbered at all, being treated simply as a preface. This must have been an early arrangement, as our present Second Psalm is quoted as the First (according to the best Greek MSS.) in Acts xiii. 33. In other MSS. again, the two Psalms appear as one. Tradition is silent as to date and authorship, but many considerations make it probable that it was written by Solomon as a preface to a collection of his father's poetry. It is worth notice that the word "mockers," "scorners," ver. i., occurs nowhere else in the whole Psalter, but is frequently applied in the earlier chapters of the Proverbs to those who set themselves to despise and scoff at religion.

I BLESSED is the man who hath not walked in the  
counsel of the wicked,  
Nor stood in the way of sinners,  
Nor sat in the seat of scorners ;

I. The structure of the verse is very exact, the parallelism in each member being carefully preserved : a kind of climax has also been noticed in the choice of expressions. Thus we have, first, three degrees of habit in the verbs "walked," "stood," "sat ;"—next, three degrees of evil in the character : the "wicked," described as the passionate, or restless (cf. Is. lvii. 20, Job iii. 17) ; or perhaps, simply, as the unrighteous, the false ; "the sinners,"

as the active habitual doers of iniquity ; "the mockers" (Prov. xxi. 24), who make an open scoff, and blaspheme : lastly, three degrees of openness in the evil doing, the "counsel" referring, apparently, to hidden designs (cf. Job xxi. 16, xxii. 18 ; Jer. vii. 24) ; "the way" to public life ; "the seat" (so the LXX., as in 1 Sam. xx. 18, 25), or perhaps "assembly" (as cvii. 32, Jer. xv. 17), *conscensus*, to a deliberate confederacy in wickedness.

- 2 But in the Law of Jehovah is his delight,  
And in His Law doth he meditate day and night.  
3 So is he like a tree planted by streams of water,  
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,  
And whose leaf also doth not wither :  
And all that he doeth he maketh to prosper.  
4 Not so are the wicked ;  
But (they are) like the chaff which the wind driveth  
away.  
5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgement,  
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.  
6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous,  
And the way of the wicked shall perish.

2. The Law, *i.e.* the *Book* of the Law, as is plain from the manifest allusion to Josh. I. 8. See also Deut. v. 31, xi. 18—20, xvii. 19 ; Ps. xl. 7, 8.

DOETH MEDITATE. The verb answers more nearly to the Latin *meditor* than any other word. Strictly, it means to utter any dull, confused sound : and hence it is employed of inward utterance, of the words a man speaks to himself ; and also of giving open and loud expression to the thoughts.

3. LIKE A TREE, &c. The figure would be much more expressive in an Eastern country than amongst ourselves. The same figure is used of outward prosperity, Job viii. 16, 17, Ezek. xix. 10, and also of the confidence and strength of the righteous, Ps. lii. 8, xcii. 12, Is. xlv. 4, Jer. xvii. 8, Ezek. xlvii. 12.

AND ALL, &c. A transition from the figure of the tree to the person who is compared to the tree. But, apparently, the verbs are chosen so as to carry on the metaphor ; for both of them would refer to the tree as well as to the man.

4. NOT SO. A simple but emphatic contrast. The wicked perish even more utterly than the dry and withered tree. They are as "the chaff." Again, far more striking as an Eastern image than among ourselves. In Is. xvii. 13, "chaff of the mountains ;" because the threshing-floors were usually on high, exposed spots, where the wind would sweep over them the more freely, (See the same figure, Ps. xxxv. 5, Job xxi. 18, Is. xxix. 5, xli. 2 ; Hos. xiii. 3. Cf. Matt. iii. 12.

5. IN THE JUDGEMENT. Primarily no doubt referring to the general course of God's righteous judgements, with an allusion to the forms of a human tribunal :—but reaching further to the final judgement.

CONGREGATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS, *i.e.* the true Israelites who are separated from the congregation of the evil doers. (Cf. Ezek. xiii. 9.)

6. KNOWETH, *i.e.* regards with watchful care and love (xxx. 7, cxliv. 3, Job xxiii. 10).

## PSALM II.

THIS Psalm, like the last, bears no inscription, and it is impossible to say who was its author, or what event occasioned its being written. The older interpreters (especially the Jewish) referred it to David, and the attacks made upon him by the Philistines (2 Sam. v.). Others, again, suppose Solomon to be the king spoken of, and that it was written at the time of his accession, when the Edomites and Syrians, and probably other heathen tribes, were meditating a general insurrection. It would be better, however, to connect the Psalm with the events mentioned in 2 Sam. x. There we find a confederacy of Syrians, Ammonites, and others, who had formerly been subdued (2 Sam. viii. 3, 12), and who were now making a last effort for their independence. The Psalm may refer to this struggle, and there may also be an allusion to the promise which was shortly before given to David (2 Sam. vii. 14). Such may be the historical meaning of this poem, but we must look beyond this. The Jews themselves admit that the earliest interpretation of this Psalm was Messianic, and that the "anointed" is "King Messiah." Doubtless it had a prophetic reference to the banding together of Herod and Pontius Pilate against Christ (Acts iv. 25—27). But it may be said to have an ever repeated fulfilment in the history of God's kingdom upon earth, which has in all ages the powers of the world arrayed against it, and in all ages with the same disastrous result to those who have risen "against the Lord, and against His Anointed."

In form, the Psalm is dramatic, the action being carried on by different speakers, who successively take their parts. It consists of four strophes:—

I. The singer sees with astonishment the nations gathering together, and their Princes conspiring to cast off the yoke of Jehovah and His Anointed. Ver. 1—3.

II. Jehovah, sitting throned in heaven, mocks their designs, and confounds them with His word. Ver. 4—6.

III. The anointed king announces the Divine decree by which he rules, which assures him of victory in the struggle, and of boundless dominion. Ver. 7—9.

IV. The poet, in consequence of what he has seen, counsels the rebellious monarchs to submit themselves to the sway of their lawful sovereign. Ver. 10—12.

- 1 WHY have nations raged tumultuously,  
And (why do) peoples meditate a vain thing ?
- 2 Kings of the earth set themselves,  
And princes have taken counsel together  
Against Jehovah and against His Anointed :—
- 3 “Let us break their bonds asunder,  
And cast away their cords from us.”
- 4 He that is throned in the Heaven laughs :

I. WHY—a question at once of wonder and horror. Why this attempt to throw off the yoke of the true king ? It is not a tyrant against whom they are leagued. It is Jehovah himself who is assailed in the person of the King whom He has set on the throne. Such an enterprise cannot but fail. In its very nature it is “a vain thing.” In this word, says Luther, is comprised the argument of nearly the whole Psalm. How can they succeed who set themselves against Jehovah and against His Christ ? The abrupt question is in the true spirit of lyric poetry. So Horace, gazing with horror on the spectacle of civil strife, breaks forth : “Quo, quo scelesti ruitis ? aut cur dexteris, Aptantur enses conditi ?”

MEDITATE, as in i. 2.

2. SET THEMSELVES—of assuming deliberately a hostile attitude as of Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 16 ; of the angel who meets Balaam, Num. xxii. 22. This verb is in the *present* ; for the singer sees, as it were, their hostile array before his eyes. The next is again in the *past*, “they *have* banded themselves,” the conspiracy and con-

federacy having preceded the mustering of their hosts to the battle.

After the double parallelism with which the Psalm opens, there comes the single line which, in its majestic simplicity, at once reveals the design, and the hopelessness of the design, “Against Jehovah and against His Anointed.” There is a very remarkable comment on these words in the Mechilta, quoted in the Yulkut Shimeoni (ii. f. 90, 1 Sch. p. 227) : “Like a robber who was standing and expressing his contempt behind the palace of the King, and saying, If I find the Son of the King, I will seize him, and kill him, and crucify him, and put him to a terrible death ; but the Holy Spirit mocks at it, and saith : He that dwelleth in the heavens laughs.”

3. LET US BREAK THEIR BONDS ASUNDER (*i.e.* those of Jehovah and His Christ). The metaphor is borrowed from restive animals which break the cords, and throw off the yoke. Cf. Is. x. 27, lviii. 6. The phrase occurs again, cvii. 14, and often in Jeremiah.

4—6. And now from all this wild



- The Lord hath them in derision :  
 5 Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath,  
 And in His sore displeasure terrify them :  
 6 —“ But *I* have set My King  
 On Zion, My holy mountain.”
- 7 I will tell of a decree ;  
 Jehovah said unto me : “ Thou art my son,  
*I* have this day begotten thee :

tempest of confusion upon earth, from the trampling of gathering armies, and the pride of kingly captains, and their words of haughty menace, the poet turns his eyes to heaven. There, on His everlasting throne, sits the Almighty King, in whose sight all nations and kings are but as a drop of the bucket.

5. The change in the rhythm of the original is worthy of notice ; it becomes full and sonorous, “donner-artig” as Delitzsch calls it, rolling like the thunder, and is rendered the more effective by its contrast with the quiet manner of ver. 4.

6. As the first strophe closed with the words of the rebels, so this with the words of Jehovah.

And in the words *BUT I* we have the central truth of the Psalm. The “but” is to be explained as referring to an unexpressed “ye may plot,” or some thought of the kind, in the mind of the speaker. It is God’s own answer to them that oppose Him. *I* (the pronoun is emphatic in the Heb.), the King of heaven and earth, have set my own King, my Son, and my vicegerent, upon the throne. (Cf. I Sam. xvi. 1.)

ON ZION, not the place where the King was anointed, for that would hold neither of type (whether David or Solomon) nor of antitype : but as the seat of dominion, the centre from which His law goes forth, &c. Cf.

cx. 2 ; and in the fact that His throne is on “the holy mountain,” there is a kind of anticipative hint of the great truth which is first distinctly taught in the 110th Psalm, that the Anointed King should also be the Anointed Priest.

7. A sudden change of speakers takes place. The Son, the Anointed King, appears, and proclaims the Father’s counsel concerning Him. He has received of Jehovah a decree—the new law of His kingdom. He reigns not by the will of man, but by the grace of God ; not by right only as the Son of Jehovah, but by covenant and promise likewise. (See the stress laid on this Divine calling as fulfilled in Christ in Heb. v. 5.)

The expression, “*I* this day have begotten thee,” can only mean, This day have I declared and manifested thee to be my Son, by investing thee with thy kingly dignity, and placing thee on thy throne. St. Paul teaches us to see the *fulfilment* of these words in Christ’s resurrection from the dead. It was by *that* that He was declared to be (marked out as, in a distinct and peculiar sense, *ὁρισθέντος*) the Son of God. (Rom. i. 4 ; cf. Acts xiii. 33.) The day of Christ’s coronation was the day of His resurrection. From henceforth He sits at the right hand of the Father, waiting till His enemies be made His footstool.

- 8 Ask of Me, and I will give thee the nations for  
thine inheritance,  
And for thy possession the ends of the earth.  
9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron :  
Like a potter's vessel shalt thou dash them in  
pieces.”
- 10 And now—ye kings, learn wisdom !  
Receive instruction, ye judges of the earth !  
11 Serve Jehovah with fear,  
And exult with trembling !  
12 Kiss the Son lest He be angry,  
And ye perish in (your) way ;  
For soon is His wrath kindled :  
Blessed are all they that find refuge in Him !

8. ASK OF ME, AND I WILL GIVE THEE. A poetical figure, by which is represented God's willingness to give to His Anointed the kingdoms of the world.

10. AND NOW, drawing a conclusion from what precedes (Prov. v. 7, Is. xxviii. 22.)

JUDGES OF THE EARTH, as in ver. 2, “kings of the earth,” who had placed themselves at the head of the insurrection.

LEARN WISDOM ! RECEIVE INSTRUCTION. Submit yourselves ; not only in a political sense, but also in a religious sense, become His true worshippers.

12. KISS THE SON. The verb has been taken in two senses : (1) “to cleave, adhere to, lay hold of,” &c.—a sense which is not supported by usage ; and (2) “to kiss,” *i.e.* according to the Eastern custom, to proffer homage and service. (Cf. 1 Sam. x. 1.) Gen. xli. 40 is probably to be explained in the same way : “thy mouth shall all my people kiss,”\* not as in E. V. “according unto thy word shall,”

&c. The word is also used of the worship paid to idols, 1 Kings xix. 18. Hos. xiii. 2. We must therefore either render (with the Syr.) “Do homage to the Son,” or (with Jerome) “proffer pure homage, worship in purity.” Both translations are admissible. Nor does it seem very important which we adopt, though the interpretation of this clause has sometimes been debated as if it affected the Messianic character of the Psalm. But that must be determined by the general scope of the Psalm, not by a single phrase ; not to mention that ver. 6, 7, are quite as emphatic as ver. 12.

It should be observed that two of the names given by the Jews themselves to the Hope of Israel were taken from this Psalm (and Dan. ix. 25), the Messiah, ver. 2, and the Son of God, ver. 7. Nathanael says to Jesus, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God,” John i. 49, and both names are joined together by the High Priest, Matt. xxvi. 63. In like manner the name “Son of Man” is taken from Ps. viii. 4, and Dan. vii. 13.

\* See Marginal Note in Bible.

## PSALM III.

THIS and the following Psalm have several links of connection, are in the same strain of thought and feeling, and were probably composed under the same circumstances. From the inscription of this Psalm we learn what those circumstances were. It was written by David when he fled from his son Absalom. Both Psalms, it has been conjectured, were composed on the same day ; the one in the morning, the other in the evening of the day following that on which the king quitted Jerusalem.

From ver. 5 we gather that the Psalm is, as has been said, a morning hymn. With returning day there comes back on the monarch's heart the recollection of the enemies who threaten him,—a nation up in arms against him, his own son heading the rebellion, his wisest and most trusted counsellor in the ranks of his foes (2 Sam. xv.—xvii.). Never, not even when hunted by Saul, had he found his position one of greater danger. The odds were overwhelmingly against him. This is a fact which he does not attempt to hide from himself: "How *many* are mine enemies;" "*Many* rise up against me;" "*Many* say to my soul;" "*Ten thousands* of the people have set themselves against me." But sustained by Jehovah, he had laid him down and slept in safety ; trusting in the same mighty protection, he would lie down again to rest. Enemies might taunt (iii. 2) and friends might fail him, but the victory was Jehovah's, and He could break the teeth of the ungodly (iii. 7, 8).

The Psalm may be divided into four strophes:—

I. The present danger and distress. Ver. 1, 2.

II. The recollection of mercy and help in times past. Ver. 3, 4.

III. As arising from this, the sense of peace and security even in the midst of the present danger: Ver. 5, 6.

IV. The prayer for help against enemies, and for blessings upon Israel. Ver. 7, 8.

[A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN HE FLED FROM THE FACE OF HIS SON ABSALOM.]

- 1 JEHOVAH, how many are mine adversaries,  
Many are they that rise up against me!
- 2 Many there be that say to my soul :  
"There is no help for him in God."—[Selah.]
- 3 But THOU, O Jehovah, art a shield about me ;  
My Glory and the Lifter-up of my head.
- 4 With my voice to Jehovah do I cry,  
And He answereth me from His holy mountain.—  
[Selah.]
- 5 I laid me down, and slept ;  
I awaked, for Jehovah sustaineth me.
- 6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people  
Which have set (themselves) against me round about.

1. HOW MANY, &c. ; nearly all Israel. Compare 2 Sam. xvi. 15, xvii. 1, 11—13, with xv. 18.

THAT RISE UP AGAINST ME. The very expression used twice by the Cushite who brings tidings to David of the death of Absalom, and the defeat of the rebels. (2 Sam. xviii. 31, 32.)

2. TO MY SOUL, rather than "OF my soul," though this is implied ; but they aim at, and strike to, his soul. He *feels* it, and feels how deadly the aim is.

NO HELP FOR HIM. David was thinking perhaps of what Shimei had said : "The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned ; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son" (2 Sam. xvi. 8).

3. A SHIELD. Such God had declared Himself to be to Abraham in Gen. xv. 1, and that, it should be remembered, just after Abraham had returned from the battle with the kings. We cannot wonder that such a name of God should have had a peculiar preciousness for

David. No man was ever harder pressed by enemies, and no man had ever more cause to rejoice in the thought that God was his shield.

4. Expresses not a single act, but the habit of a life. Whenever I cry, God hears me from His holy hill, *i.e.* Zion, where was the ark of the covenant.

The Priests and Levites, when he left Jerusalem, would have carried the ark after him. But with that faith which can alone teach true resignation, he says, "Carry back the ark of God into the city : if I shall find favour in the eyes of Jehovah, He will bring me again, and show me both it and His habitation." To David the ark was no mere talisman. The presence and favour of Jehovah were not bound to the local symbol of His presence. 'In the heart, not in the hands,' was David's feeling. It was the very opposite of that superstitious impulse which led the Israelites to take the ark with them into battle, 1 Sam. iv. 3—6. (2 Sam. xv. 25.)

5. I LAID ME DOWN. The pron.

7 Arise, O Jehovah! Help me, O my God!

For Thou hast smitten all mine enemies on the cheek-bone;

Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

8 To Jehovah belongeth the victory.

Let Thy blessing be upon Thy people.—[Selah.]

is emphatic, as if he would say, "I, my very self, hunted and cursed by my enemies, have tasted the goodness of the Lord even in the night that is past."

7. Either an appeal to the past: O Thou that didst save me from the teeth of the lion and of the bear, and didst destroy mine enemies on every side, rise up now for me against them that rise up against me. Or perhaps, as in many other instances, the perfects may anticipate the result, they express the sure confidence that God *will* crush his enemies, which he speaks of as an already accomplished fact.

It is impossible not to feel how appropriate, again, this metaphor,—smiting on the cheek-bone, breaking the teeth, &c.—is in David's mouth.

As he himself had smitten the bear and the lion when they came against him, so should God smite his enemies.

8. VICTORY, or, "THE help." Such is his confident, courageous answer to the timorous whispers of friends, and the mocking exultation of enemies. They said, "There is no help for him in God." He replies, To Jehovah belongeth help, help not in this strait only, but in all times and places.

Finally, how noble the prayer of the royal exile, asking not for himself alone, but for his poor, misguided subjects—"Let Thy blessing be upon Thy people." What a glimpse this gives us of the greatness and generosity of that kingly heart!

## PSALM IV.

DAVID had said in the previous Psalm, "I laid me down and slept:" he says in this, "I will lay me down in peace and sleep." These words evidently connect the Psalms together. That was a morning, this is an evening hymn. That was written with a deep sense of thankfulness for the undisturbed rest which had followed the most anxious, in some respects the dreariest, day of his life; this was written with a calm confidence, flowing directly from the previous experience. The interval between the two Psalms may only have been the interval between the morning and evening of the same day. The thoughts and turns of expression in the one are not unlike those in the other. As in the former he heard many saying to his soul,

"There is no help for him in God" (ver. 2), so in this he hears many saying, "Who will show us any good?" (ver. 6). As in that he knew that, though at a distance from the Tabernacle, he was not at a distance from God, but would receive an answer to his prayer from the "holy mountain" (ver. 4), so in this, though the Priests have returned with the Ark to Jerusalem, he can look for "the light of Jehovah's countenance," which is better than the Urim and Thummim of the priestly ephod.

It is worthy of notice that David does not cry to God for vengeance on his enemies, but earnestly seeks to bring them to a better mind. The strong feeling of injured innocence prompts no thought of revenge, but only the noble desire to teach those who have done the wrong a more excellent way. The monarch does not forget that he is a monarch; and with a monarch's heart, lifted here at least above the littleness of personal resentment, he tries to win over the subjects who have rebelled against him.

The Psalm may be said to fall into three unequal strophes :—

I. The cry directed to God. Ver. 1.

II. The earnest warning addressed to his enemies, in two parts. Ver. 2—5.

III. The calm expression on the part of David of his peace and confidence in God. Ver. 6—8.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

1 WHEN I cry, answer me, O God of my righteousness!

Thou that in straitness hast made room for me :

Be gracious unto me, and hear my prayer.

2 Ye sons of men ! how long shall my glory be (turned)  
to shame ?

1. GOD OF MY RIGHTEOUSNESS, *i.e.* Thou who maintainest my right and my cause, asserting my righteousness against the slanders of my enemies. (Cf. lix. 10.) But not to be confined to this : it also means who knowest the righteousness, the sincerity of my heart and life.

2. SONS OF MEN. Generally "men of high degree," nobles, &c., as opposed to "men of low degree," xlix. 2, lxii. 9.

MY GLORY, *i.e.* personal honour, character, as in lxii. 7, Job xix. 9 ; here, perhaps, my state and dignity as king, though it is frequently

(How long) will ye love emptiness, will ye seek  
after lies?—[Selah.]

- 3 Know then, that Jehovah hath separated for Himself  
one whom He loves.

Jehovah hearkeneth when I cry unto Him.

- 4 Tremble and sin not :

Commune with your heart, on your bed, and be  
still.—[Selah.]

- 5 Offer sacrifices of righteousness,  
And trust in Jehovah.

- 6 There be many that say : “ Who will show us (any)  
good ? ”

Lift Thou upon us the light of Thy countenance,  
O Jehovah !

used in a more extended signification.

3. SEPARATED, or “ *marvellously* chosen.”

4. He passes on to wise and loving counsels. TREMBLE, *i.e.* before God, not before me, and sin not against Him. The LXX. “ Be ye angry and sin not,” certainly a possible rendering of the words, *viz.* “ do not suffer yourselves to sin in your anger,” but not suitable here. St. Paul (Eph. iv. 26) uses the words as they stand in the Greek version, not, however, in the way of direct citation.

COMMUNE WITH, *lit. say (it) in your heart*, *i.e.* reflect, meditate on the truth I have already declared, *ver.*

3. Let the still hours of the night bring calmer and wiser thoughts with them.

5. OFFER SACRIFICES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, or RIGHTEOUS SACRIFICES, as in li. 19. The phrase occurs first in Deut. xxxiii. 19, and denotes either (*a*) sacrifices that God will accept, because they are offered with clean hands and pure hearts ; or, (*b*) fitting sacrifices, such as your past sin re-

quires, in order to put it away. But the two come to the same thing, as it is of course not merely outward offerings which the Psalmist bids them bring. (Cf. li. 19, Is. xxix. 13.) Thus, “ draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.”

6. THERE BE MANY THAT SAY. Not the enemies addressed before. The reference may be to the friends and companions of David, whose heart failed them in the day of trouble ; or more widely, to the general proneness of men to walk by sight rather than by faith.

But David has learnt a better lore. Though far from “ the holy mountain,” there still dwells in his heart the blessing wherewith the Priests of Jehovah had there blessed His people. “ Jehovah make His face shine upon thee. . . Jehovah lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace ” (see Num. vi. 24). To that remembered blessing his heart now gives the echo in the prayer, “ Jehovah, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. . . In peace I will lay me down,” &c.

- 7 Thou hast put a gladness in my heart,  
 More than when their corn and their wine abound.  
 8 In peace, at once will I lay me down and sleep;  
 For THOU, Jehovah, alone makest me to dwell in  
 safety.

7. THEIR CORN AND THEIR WINE. To whom does the pronoun refer? Hengstenberg and others have supposed the allusion to be to Ziba (2 Sam. xvi.), and the supply which he brought for David and his band. Others think the pronoun is used indefinitely, as in lxxv. 9, "Thou preparest *their* corn," *i.e.* the corn of men in general. Perhaps, however, the reference of the pronoun is to the "many" of the previous verse. They in their worldly-mindedness look for their happiness in the abundance of their earthly things. Hence when adversity threatens they begin to despond. David, on the other hand, has a source of joy, deeper and more unfailing because it flows from above.

For the comparison with the joy of harvest and vintage as the great occasions of festive mirth, see Is. ix. 3, Jer. xlviii. 33.

Some have seen in this verse an answer to the prayer of the previous verse. David prays for the light of God's countenance; the answer is given in this gladness of heart. But it is better to take the words, "Thou hast put," &c., as the record of a past as well as present experience, though it still remains true that the "light" is the source of the "gladness."

8. AT ONCE, *sc.* as soon as I lie down I sleep, not harassed by disturbing and anxious thoughts. For this meaning of the adverb, see Is. xlii. 14.

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## PSALM V.

LIKE Psalm III. this is a morning prayer. But the circumstances of the singer are different. He is not now fleeing from open enemies, but he is in peril from the machinations of those who are secretly lying in wait for him (ver. 9, 10). He is not now an exile, but can still enter the house of the Lord and bow himself towards His holy dwelling-place (ver. 7).

Throughout the Psalm there breathes a strong feeling that God is pledged, by His very character as a righteous God, to defend and bless the righteous. And David (if the Psalm be his) speaks as if in the full consciousness of his own uprightness. Yet the words are not the words of a self-righteous boaster; for though no hypocrite or evil-doer, he confesses that it is only in the loving-kindness of God that he can enter His holy temple.



This last expression, "holy temple," it has been thought could not have been used by David; in whose time the Tabernacle was yet standing. But for the discussion of this question, see the Note on ver. 7.

The Psalm consists of three parts :—

I. An earnest entreaty that God would hearken to the sigh of his heart and the voice of his lips. Ver. 1—3.

II. Strophe A. The confidence of the righteous man in going to God as a God who hates iniquity. Ver. 4—7.

III. Strophe B. The prayer grounded on this confidence, (1) for guidance for himself: (2) for the destruction of his enemies: (3) for the protection and blessing of all those who, like himself, love the Lord. Ver. 8—12.

A kind of parallelism may be traced in the structure of the two strophes. Thus ver. 4 answers to ver. 9: ver. 4—6 (the character of God) to ver. 10, where the Psalmist prays Him to *manifest* that character in righteous vengeance: ver. 7 (the individual believer) to ver. 11, 12 (the collective body).

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. WITH FLUTE ACCOMPANIMENT. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 GIVE ear to my words, O Jehovah,  
Consider my meditation.
- 2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God,  
For unto Thee do I pray.
- 3 Jehovah, in the morning shalt Thou hear my voice,  
In the morning will I set in order for Thee (my prayer)  
and will watch.

2. MY KING. The title is given to God, not merely in a general sense as Ruler of the world—as the Canaanites and others call their gods, Moloch and Milcom, or the Greeks addressed Zeus, as *ἄναξ* and *βασιλεύς*—but with the distinct recognition of His theocratic relation to the people of Israel. The King of the nation is here also claimed by the individual as his king,

the more emphatically, if the Psalm was written by David, by one who was himself a king. See the Notes on xlv. 4, lxxiv. 12.

UNTO THEE, *i.e.* not to man or angel; to *Thee*, for Thou wilt hear. (Cf. xvii. 6.)

3. IN THE MORNING. Emphatic. I WILL SET (or "lay") IN ORDER (*viz.* my prayer). The word is used

- 4 For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness,  
 Evil cannot sojourn with Thee.  
 5 Fools cannot stand in Thy sight ;  
 Thou hatest all workers of iniquity ;  
 6 Thou destroyest them that speak lies ;  
 The bloodthirsty and deceitful man doth Jehovah  
 abhor.  
 7 But as for me—in the multitude of Thy loving-kindness  
 will I enter Thy house ;

of laying in order the wood (Lev. i. 7) and the victim (Lev. i. 8, vi. 12) for the sacrifices. One of the first duties of the priest, as soon as day dawned, was to lay the wood in order for the morning sacrifice (Lev. vi. 12, Numb. xxviii. 4). So the Psalmist brings his offering, prepares himself as a spiritual sacrifice, and lays before God the fruit of his lips. (The idea is expressed at length in Ps. cxli. 2, "and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.") And then he "watches," "looks out" (the same verb as in Hab. ii. 1), for an answer to his petition, as the priest might look (or as Elijah looked on Carmel) for the fire from heaven to descend and consume the victim.

4. The Psalmist expects to be heard, *for* only the righteous can approach a righteous God. "Ratio-cinatur," says Calvin, "ab ipsius Dei naturâ."

"Evil (personified) cannot be a guest or friend of Thine; cannot tarry in Thy house," as xv. 1; not merely however with a reference to the Temple, but to that spiritual abiding in the presence of God, and in the light of His countenance, which is the joy only of them that are true of heart. To the wicked the light of God's countenance is a consuming fire.

5. CANNOT STAND, lit. "set themselves," the same word as in ii. 2. The allusion may be (1) to the judge-

ment, "cannot stand before God's holiness and power as armed against them," as in Deut. vii. 24, ix. 2, &c.; or (2) to the privilege of nobles and others who stand in the presence of the King, cf. Prov. xxii. 29. So the angels are said to stand before God (Job i. 6, ii. 1).

WORKERS OF INIQUITY occurs frequently in Job and the Psalms as a description of the wicked, and has been adopted by our Lord in the N.T., Matt. vii. 23.

7. As the Psalm is a morning hymn, the futures may be taken strictly, "I *will* enter," &c. But there is also something of the potential meaning about them: *sc.* the wicked *cannot* enter, but I *may* (and will) enter Thine house. The mention of the house and the temple has sometimes been regarded as a proof that the Psalm could not have been written by David. But the latter word means properly a large building, "a palace," and is used of the sanctuary at Shiloh, 1 Sam. i. 9, iii. 3, which seems to have been not a tabernacle, but a building of a more substantial kind. We read at any rate of posts and folding-doors (1 Sam. i. 9, iii. 15); whereas in the time of David, "the ark of the covenant of the Lord remained under curtains" (1 Chron. xvii. 1). And there is certainly no proof that the word is ever used of this temporary structure. Still it is possible that the word which had

I will bow myself towards Thy holy temple in Thy fear.

8 O Jehovah, lead me in Thy righteousness, because of them that lie in wait for me,

Make Thy way plain before my face ;

9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth ;

Their inward part is a yawning gulf ;

already been employed when speaking of the house in Shiloh continued to be employed when only a tent was pitched for the ark (1 Chron. xv. 1). It might still be called a temple or palace because of its solemn dedication as the house of God, the palace of the Great King.

IN THE MULTITUDE OF THY LOVING-KINDNESS. The Psalmist has access to God not only because he is of a different *character* from those mentioned in ver. 6, but because the King of kings, of His grace and goodness, permits him to draw near.

8—10. In the former part of the Psalm, David has placed himself in sharp contrast with "the workers of iniquity," with "them that speak lies," &c., and on this ground has claimed the protection and favour of Jehovah. Now he entreats more directly guidance for himself and the destruction of his enemies, as false and treacherous men, like those whom he has already described and whom "Jehovah abhors."

8. LEAD ME (strictly, as a shepherd, cf. xxiii. 2, 3, xxxi. 3), used almost exclusively of *Divine* guidance, whether of the nation or of individuals.

IN THY RIGHTEOUSNESS. This may be understood (1) of God's own character. His righteousness itself is pledged to succour those who worship Him and seek His guidance ; cf. cxliii. 1. Or (2) it may mean "*the way of God's righteousness*" (cf. for

instance, Prov. viii. 20, xii. 28), called *God's* righteousness, not only as pleasing to Him, but as coming from Him as its source, and as that which He has appointed for men to walk in. So "the righteousness of God" in the N.T. means both God's own attribute of righteousness (as in Rom. iii. 5), and also the righteousness which He requires of men, and gives to men, Rom. i. 17, iii. 21, 22. Both senses seem to be blended in Rom. iii. 25, 26.

MAKE THY WAY. The way in which Thou wouldst have me to go, not any self-devised way of my own.

PLAIN or STRAIGHT, lit. "level," lest I stumble and fall into the hand of my adversaries. The "straight way" may be either (morally) the path of purity, uprightness, &c. ; or (physically) the path of safety, prosperity ; or rather, both ideas are combined.

9. FOR. This gives the reason for the prayer, "Lead me because of them that lie in wait for me : " for their malice is such that I need Thy care and guidance. With them, mouth, heart, throat, and tongue are all instruments of evil.

NO FAITHFULNESS, lit. "nothing firm, settled."

The expressions point not to foreign oppressors, but evidently to ungodly men in the nation itself who had recourse to slander and treachery when they dared not use open violence. It is the opposition and the

Their throat is an open sepulchre,  
(While) they make smooth their tongue.

10 Punish Thou them, O God :—

Let them fall through their own counsels :  
In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them  
away ;

For they have rebelled against Thee.

11 And all who find refuge in Thee shall rejoice ;

For ever shall they shout for joy ;

And Thou wilt defend them :

And they who love Thy Name shall exult in Thee.

12 For Thou, O Jehovah, dost bless the righteous,  
With favour dost Thou compass him as with a shield.

contest ever repeated between the Church and the world. Cf. Gal. iv. 29.

10. AGAINST THEE. The enemies of David are the enemies of David's God. "Whoso toucheth you, toucheth the apple of Mine eye." "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

11. AND ALL . . . . SHALL, or, SO SHALL ALL. For the cause of David is the cause of all who have David's heart and fear David's God. The overthrow of his enemies is the overthrow of the enemies of the Church. If one member suffer, all suffer ; if one triumph, all will be partakers in the triumph.

AND THOU WILT DEFEND THEM. Or if we take the preceding verbs as futures : "And Thou defendest (or wilt defend) them : " the clauses being thus simply linked together as fre-

quently in Hebrew, instead of saying, "because Thou," &c. The verb means strictly *to cover*, and the figure is either taken from the cherubim with outstretched wings covering the mercy-seat (hence of God, xci. 4) ; or from the *booth* or *tabernacle* used figuratively of God's house as a place of shelter and refuge from the world. See the expansion of the figure, Is. iv. 5, 6.

THY NAME. God's name is that whereby He makes Himself known : His revelation of Himself as a God of Love and Grace to His people.

12. SHIELD. The word denotes properly the large shield which covered the whole body ; used of the shield of Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 7. For the difference between this and the other word used in iii. 3, see Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, Art. ARMS.

## PSALM VI.

THE first of the seven Penitential Psalms.

In great peril from his enemies, and in great anguish of heart, David cries to God for mercy. In the malice of his enemies he sees the rod of God's chastisement; and therefore he makes his prayer to God for deliverance. The struggle has lasted so long, the grief is so bitter, that his health has given way, and he has been brought to the gates of the grave. But even whilst thus pouring out the anguish of his spirit, light and peace visit him, and he breaks forth into the joy of thanksgiving.

The Psalm is said to be a Psalm of David, and there is no reason to question this, although at the same time there is nothing in it to guide us to any peculiar circumstances of his life.

The Psalm falls into three strophes :—

I. (ver. 1—3) and II. (ver. 4—7) are both the outpourings of the heart in a cry for mercy, and in both it springs from the deep misery of the sufferer. But in II. this is dwelt upon more at length as a motive for deliverance.

III. The joyful assurance that already his prayer has been heard, and that all his enemies shall perish. Ver. 8—10.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. WITH ACCOMPANIMENT OF STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. UPON THE OCTAVE.\* A PSALM OF DAVID.]

I JEHOVAH, in Thine anger rebuke me not;  
Neither in Thy hot displeasure correct me.

I. ANGER . . . . . DISPLEASURE.  
The prayer occurs again, in almost the same words, xxxviii. 1. All God's chastisements are not in anger. There is a fatherly correction of love. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten," Rev. iii. 19. See also Ps. xciv. 12, cxviii. 17, 18; Prov. iii. 11, 12; and

based upon this passage, Heb. xii. 3—

II. Indeed the whole Book of Job is intended to correct the error that "chastisement always proceeds from a principle of anger." And the sufferings of Christ are a witness to the contrary; for that "the Father loveth the Son" is eternally true. Does the

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\* We may suppose the octave to mean that it was to be sung by men's voices.

- 2 Be gracious unto me, O Jehovah, for I languish :  
Heal me, O Jehovah, for my bones are vexed.
- 3 My soul also is sore vexed ;  
But Thou, O Jehovah, how long ?
- 4 Return, O Jehovah, deliver my soul :  
Oh save me for Thy loving-kindness' sake.
- 5 For in death there is no remembrance of Thee :  
In the unseen world who shall give Thee thanks ?

Psalmist then pray that God would chasten him indeed, but in love, not in anger? This is Luther's interpretation : "This he regards not, nay will readily suffer that he be punished and chastened : but he begs that it may be done in mercy and goodness, not in anger and fury . . . he teaches us therefore that there are two rods of God ; one of mercy and goodness, another of anger and fury. Hence Jeremiah prays, chap. x. 24, 'O Lord, correct me, but with judgement ; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing.'" But though there is nothing against this view considered in itself, yet it does not harmonize with the context ; for the Psalmist prays that the rod may *altogether* be removed, and that because body and mind are alike giving way. The chastisement has been so heavy, and has endured so long, and his own sense of sin is so grievous, that he begins to fear lest God should shut up His tender mercies in displeasure, and should consume him in His wrath.

The meaning, says Calvin, is : "I indeed confess that I deserve nothing but destruction : but because I could not endure the severity of Thy judgement, deal not with me after my deserts ; yea rather, forgive the sins whereby I have provoked Thine anger against me."

3. BUT THOU, O JEHOVAH, HOW LONG? Deep and troubled emotion suffers him not to complete the sen-

tence. Perhaps we may supply, "How long wilt Thou delay to have mercy upon me?" Cf. xc. 13. "Domine quousque?" was Calvin's motto. The most intense grief in trouble, it is said, could never extort from him another word.

4. The beginning of this strophe is closely linked to the end of the last.

RETURN ; for it seems to the sufferer as if God had been absent during his affliction. And there is no hope for him but in God. Therefore the repeated prayer, *Do Thou* be gracious unto me :—how long wilt *Thou* be absent? Return *Thou*, &c. And observe, not only "be gracious, *for I languish*," but "deliver me for *Thy loving-kindness' sake*." Any man may use the first argument : only one who has tasted that the Lord is gracious can use the last.

5. The argument here employed is no doubt characteristic of the Old Dispensation. They who then feared and loved God, nevertheless walked in shadows, and their hope was not yet full of immortality. Hence their earnest clinging to life, so different from St. Paul's "desire to depart," to which there is nothing parallel in the Old Testament. It was not that they dreaded annihilation, but rather a kind of disembodied existence apart from the Light of God's Presence. But we should observe that *premature* death seems to have been deprecated, as if it were a token of God's displeasure. "I said, O my God, take me not away

- 6 I am weary with my groaning :  
     Every night make I my bed to swim,  
     I water my couch with my tears.
- 7 Mine eye wasteth away because of grief,  
     It waxeth old because of all mine adversaries.
- 8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity,  
     For Jehovah hath heard the voice of my weeping ;
- 9 Jehovah hath heard my supplication,  
     Jehovah will receive my prayer.
- 10 All mine enemies shall be ashamed and sore vexed ;  
     They shall turn backward, they shall be ashamed  
     suddenly.

in the midst of my days," Ps. cii. 24. So also Hezekiah prays, "Mine age is departed and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life," Is. xxxviii. 12. The Old Testament saint pleaded with God for life, in order that that life might be consecrated to His service. And it is very touching to see how, with the weakness of man's heart trembling at dissolution, there mingles the child-like confidence which fears not to advance the plea that God's glory is concerned in granting its request.

8—10. Mark the sudden change, as of sunrise upon night. Already the prayer and the weeping have been heard. Already Faith has triumphed. Already he can defy the enemies who have been maliciously anticipating his end, and tell them they shall be disappointed with a suddenness which only makes the disappointment more bitter.

9. HATH HEARD—WILL RECEIVE. The last is a consequence of the first. He *will* grant, for He *has* heard. The verb RECEIVE is used here in the sense of favourably accepting, as gifts, offerings, &c.

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## PSALM VII.

"SHALL not the Judge of all the earth do right?" might stand as the motto of this Psalm. In full reliance on God's righteousness, David appeals to Him to judge his cause. The righteous God cannot but save the righteous, and punish the wicked. This David believes to be the law of His moral government: and he applies it to his own case. His heart bears him witness that he has done

no wrong to any man (ver. 3, 4), whereas his enemies have plotted unceasingly to take away his life. He therefore confidently anticipates his own deliverance and their overthrow (ver. 17, 18), as the manifestation of the righteous judgement of God.

There is no reason to doubt that David was (as is stated in the Inscription) the author of this Psalm. Even Ewald, who in so many other cases overthrows the authority of the inscriptions, admits that here it is probably correct. Who Cush was we do not know. Some have supposed that Cush was a sort of nickname or term of reproach ("the Moor") applied to Saul, because of the blackness, not of his face, but of his heart. But this is extremely improbable. Others again have thought that it was intended to designate Shimei. But it is more likely that Cush the Benjamite was one of Saul's adherents, of whom some tradition had been preserved as one of those who took an active part against David.

The circumstances narrated in 1 Sam. xxiv. and xxvi. might have occasioned this Psalm. Twice did David spare the life of his enemy when it was in his power to take it; and Saul himself acknowledged, "Thou art more righteous than I." It was thus that David, "hunted like a partridge of the mountains," by his enemies, and at the same time feeling conscious how little he deserved such persecution at the hands of Saul, appealed to God as the Searcher of hearts to vindicate his innocence and maintain his cause.

We have the following divisions :—

I. An Introduction, consisting (1) of an expression of confidence in God; and (2) of a prayer for deliverance from enemies. Ver. 1, 2.

II. A solemn protestation of his innocence before God. Ver. 3—5.

III. An appeal to God as the righteous Judge of all the earth, to manifest in the most public manner (ver. 6, 7) His righteousness in pronouncing sentence both upon himself (ver. 8) and upon his enemies (ver. 9), with a confident assertion (ver. 10) as to the result. Ver. 6—10.

IV. A description of God's dealing with the wicked, (1) in the way of direct punishments, and (2) as leaving the wicked to be snared in his own devices. Ver. 11—16.

V. A short thanksgiving on review of the righteous judgement of God. Ver. 17.



[SHIGGAION\* OF DAVID, WHICH HE SANG UNTO THE LORD,  
CONCERNING THE WORDS OF CUSH THE BENJAMITE.]

- 1 JEHOVAH, my God, in Thee have I found refuge,  
Save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me !
- 2 Lest he tear my soul, like a lion,  
Rending in pieces, while there is none to deliver.
- 3 Jehovah, my God, if I have done this ;  
If there be iniquity in my hands,
- 4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace  
with me ;—  
Yea rather I have rescued him that without cause is  
mine adversary :—
- 5 Let the enemy pursue after my soul and overtake (it) ;  
Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth,  
And make my glory abide in the dust.—[Selah.]
- 6 Arise, O Jehovah, in thine anger !

1. With that word of Faith, Hope, and Love, "in Thee have I found refuge," David begins his prayer. Cf. xi. 1, xvi. 1, xxxi. 1, lxxi. 1.

4. HIM THAT WAS AT PEACE WITH ME, cf. xli. 10, Jer. xxxviii. 22.

YEA RATHER, &c. The allusion may perhaps be to what is recorded 1 Sam. xxiv. 4—7.

5. The expressions may imply either the depth of humiliation and degradation, or absolute destruction.

MY GLORY may either mean (*a*) as in iv. 2, Job xix. 9, "character, good name, honour, position," &c., and then to lay this in the dust will mean of course to degrade and to dishonour (as in many similar phrases, *e.g.* lxxiv. 7, lxxxix. 39, Job xvi. 15, xl. 13) ; or (*b*) as in xvi. 9, xxx. 12, lvii.

8, Gen. xlix. 6, "the soul," as that which is noblest in man, that which most distinctly severs him from other creatures and links him to God,—a sense which here accords with the parallelism in the two previous members of the verse,—and then THE DUST must mean "the grave," or "death," as in xxii. 15, 29. The phrases "to tread down," "lay in the dust," may, however, still refer to a death of ignominy.

6—8. The rapid utterance of feeling has here somewhat broken the poet's words. Hitherto he has protested his innocence ; now in the full consciousness of that innocence he comes before the very judgement-seat of God, and demands the fullest and most public vindication. Then he

\* See Introduction, p 6.

Lift up Thyself against the fierce wrath of mine  
adversaries,

Yea awake for me!—Thou hast commanded judgement—

7 And let the congregation of the people come about Thee,  
And over it do Thou return on high.

8 Jehovah ministereth justice to the peoples :

Judge me, O Jehovah, according to my righteousness,  
And according to my integrity be it done to me.

9 O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end,  
And establish Thou the righteous!

For Thou that triest the hearts and reins art a  
righteous God.

10 My shield is upon God,

sees as it were in a vision the judgement set: "Thou hast commanded judgement." Next, that sentence may be pronounced with due solemnity, he calls upon God to gather the nations round Him, and to seat Himself upon His judgement-throne. Lastly, he prays God, as the Judge of all nations, to judge himself.

6. LIFT UP THYSELF, *i.e.* manifest Thyself in all Thy glory of God; spoken as Judge, cf. xciv. 2, Is. xxxiii. 10.

7. I have ventured to follow Mendelssohn in his translation :

"Versammle Völker um dein Richterthron,

Und wende dich gen Himmel über sie."

This, though not quite literal, is less harsh and bald than the literal rendering, "And let the congregation of the people compass Thee about," *i.e.* let there be a solemn, deliberate, and public vindication of my innocence.

OVER IT, &c. God is represented as coming down to visit the earth, and to gather the nations before Him, and

then as returning and sitting down above them on the judgement-seat.

The clause cannot mean that when God has delivered His judicial sentence, He is to return to His heavenly throne (Wordsworth). According to this explanation, the words "over it," *i.e.* the congregation of the people, are pointless, and, moreover, the whole verse evidently describes the act of judgement, the crowd assembled to hear the sentence, and then the delivery of the sentence. The verb RETURN may mark that God *has resumed* the office of judge, which for a time He had seemed to abandon; or it may be explained as above.

8. We may paraphrase "O Thou who art the Judge of all *the world*, judge *me*."

9. WICKEDNESS OF THE WICKED. Comp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 13, to which there may possibly be an allusion. The second clause of the verse does in fact (though not in form) give the reason for the prayer contained in the first clause. God "knoweth the hearts," and being a God of knowledge is also a God of justice. He therefore both *can* and *will* requite each one according to his deserts.

Who saveth them that are upright of heart.

- 11 God is a righteous Judge,  
And a God who is angry every day..  
12 If (a man) will not turn, He whetteth His sword ;  
He hath bent His bow, and made it ready.  
13 Yea for that man He hath made ready the weapons of  
death ;  
His arrows He maketh fiery (arrows).  
14 Lo, he travaileth with iniquity :—  
He hath both conceived mischief and brought forth  
falsehood.  
15 He hath digged a pit and hollowed it out ;  
And falleth into the pitfall of his making.  
16 His mischief shall return upon his own head ;  
And his violent dealing shall come down upon his  
own pate.  
17 O, let me give thanks to Jehovah according to His  
righteousness :  
And let me sing praise to the Name of Jehovah  
Most High.

11—16. God's dealing with the unrighteous vividly portrayed.

11. ANGRY, the same word as Nah. i. 2, 6.

12. God is long-suffering, but if a man (if the wicked) will not turn, He will punish him in his wickedness. HE WHETTETH HIS SWORD (cf. Deut. xxxii. 41). The first member of this verse might however be rendered, in accordance with a well-known Hebrew idiom, "Surely He (*i.e.* Jehovah)

will again whet His sword." And the first member of verse 13 will then be rendered: "He hath also prepared for Himself the weapons of death," &c.

13. YEA FOR (*i.e.* against) THAT MAN (the pron. is placed first as emphatic) He hath (already) aimed the instruments of death.

14. Not only the justice of God punishes, but the wickedness of the wicked effects his own destruction.

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## PSALM VIII.

A PSALM of David—written by him perhaps, when, yet a youth, he kept his father's flock on the hills of Bethlehem. Or if composed in later years, not composed surely without many a thought of those happier days, when the heavens by night first spake to him of the

glory of God. We seem to see him in his lonely watchings, now casting a vigilant glance around him lest any beast of prey threaten "those few sleep in the wilderness," and now lifting a loving and observant eye to heaven; and as the bright stars come out one after another in that Eastern sky, with a brilliancy and splendour almost unimaginable to us, his heart fills with the thought that it is Jehovah the God of Israel who has set His glory there, to be seen of all eyes and to be praised even by the tongues of children.

But from heaven his thoughts turn again to earth, from the glory of God to man formed to acknowledge that glory. And his first thought is, as it must be in any case, an humbling one. What is man, man in his frailty, his littleness, his sin? What is man in His sight who made yon heavens and planted in them those glittering orbs? And then there comes a correcting thought, the thought of man's greatness and dignity, as made in the image of God, and appointed by Him to have dominion over all the creatures of the earth: "Thou hast put all things under his feet."

It is evident from his words that the story of creation as given in Gen. i. was before his mind. The pious shepherd boy had treasured and pondered in his heart of hearts that record so sublime in its simplicity; the royal singer had often read it when his eyes prevented the night watches that they might be occupied in God's word.

The Messianic import of the Psalm is not of a direct kind. It is, however, necessarily implied in that mysterious relation of man to God and that kingship over the inferior creatures of which the Psalm speaks, for this rests upon the Incarnation. Man is what he is, because the Son of God has taken upon Him man's nature. Man is very near to God, higher than the angels, because the Christ is both God and Man. This is the profound truth on which the Messianic character of the Psalm depends. This truth is the key to its interpretation.

But it does not follow that David saw this distinctly. He takes what must in any case be the *religious* view of Creation, and of man's relation to God on the one hand, and to the inferior animals on the other. Some interpreters indeed have thought that David is describing, not man's actual position marred and broken by the Fall, but his original condition as created in the image of God. It is the ideal, it is the design and purpose of God, which for the moment hides from his sight the havoc and confusion which have been wrought by sin, the broken sceptre and the discrowned king. Others,

again, think that the whole Psalm is prophetic, or rather predictive. They conceive that it tells us what man shall be hereafter, redeemed and restored in the Second Adam to his rightful supremacy.

But the language of the Psalm, taken in its obvious sense, favours neither of these interpretations. David is manifestly speaking of the present. He sees the heavens witnessing for God; he sees man placed by God as ruler upon earth; he feels how high an honour has been put upon man; he marvels at God's grace and condescension. Man *is* king, however his authority may be questioned or defied.

When we turn to the New Testament where verses of this Psalm are twice applied to Christ (besides our Lord's own quotation of ver. 2, St. Matt. xxi. 16) we see at once the principle on which the quotations rest. It is precisely that which I have already laid down. The Incarnation explains it. In 1 Cor. xv. 27, St. Paul quotes with a slight change, using the third person instead of the second, the words of ver. 6, "Thou hast put all things under his feet," as describing accurately the complete subjection of the universe to Christ. The words may be true of man, but they are in their highest sense only true of Christ as the Great Head of mankind, and of man only in Him. Similarly the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 6—9) argues that the words "Thou hast put all things under his feet" have not yet been literally fulfilled of man, and declares that their proper fulfilment is to be seen only in Jesus, whom God had made "a little lower than the angels," and had "crowned with glory and honour."

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. UPON THE GITTITH.\* A PSALM OF DAVID.]

1 JEHOVAH our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all  
the earth,  
Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens!

I. OUR LORD. For the first time in the Book of Psalms the personal feeling is lost sight of in the national. Jehovah is not the God of David only, but of Israel: fitting prelude to a Psalm which forgets the individual in the contemplation of God's glory in the universe. The thought which here

appears is, in fact, the thought which is the key to the Book of Genesis, and indeed to the whole history of the Old Testament. The God who makes Himself known to Israel by His Name Jehovah, as their Redeemer, is the God who created the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth.

\* The same as in Pss. lxxxi.—xxxiv.—either an *instrument* which took its name from the city of Gath, as there was an Egyptian flute, and a Doric lyre; or a kind of measure or melody (as the Greeks had Lydian, Dorian, &c.).

- 2 Out of the mouth of children and sucklings Thou hast  
founded strength,  
Because of Thine adversaries,  
That Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
- 3 When I see Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,  
The moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained ;—
- 4 What is man, that Thou art mindful of him,  
And the son of man, that Thou visitest him ?

2. CHILDREN, not “babes,” as the E. V. ; they are more advanced in age than the SUCKLINGS ; so that there is a kind of climax, “not children only but sucklings.” As Hebrew mothers did not wean their children till they were three years old, this is no mere figure of speech.

When expositors introduce here the teaching of 1 Cor. i. 26—28, they depart from the simple language of the Psalm. David speaks *literally* of children. And so our Lord Himself applies the words, Matt. xxi. 16. Even the faith of a little child is bulwark enough against the folly of men of corrupt heart and perverted intellect. The stars above, and the lips of infants below, show forth His praise.

THE ENEMY AND THE AVENGER occurs again, xlv. 16. “Avenger” in modern English hardly conveys the sense of the Hebrew word ; it denotes “one who thirsts for or breathes revenge, one who is swift to avenge his own quarrel.”

3. David has spoken generally of the glory of Jehovah, as seen in the earth and the heavens, and which is so conspicuous that even children can discern and acknowledge it ; he now passes to a particular instance of its manifestation, and one of the most impressive, and draws thence the lesson of God’s marvellous condescension.

4. WHAT IS MAN. The first feeling

is an overpowering sense of man’s insignificance in presence of the vastness and splendour, the mysterious depth, and the exceeding glory of the heavens, as seen at night. “The vault of the sky arched at a vast and unknown distance over our heads ; the stars apparently infinite in number, each keeping its appointed place and course, and seeming to belong to a wide system of things which has no relation to the earth ; while man is but one among many millions of the earth’s inhabitants ;—all this makes the contemplative spectator feel how exceedingly small a portion of the universe he is ; how little he must be in the eyes of an Intelligence which can embrace the whole.” Add to this revelation of darkness the revelation of silence : the man is alone ; the stir and noise of his own works, which in the light of day filled and absorbed him, are hushed and buried in darkness ; his importance is gone ;—and “every person in every age and country will recognize as irresistibly natural the train of thought expressed by the Hebrew Psalmist.” It is needless to remark, if this be the feeling of the untaught mind, how infinitely the impression must be deepened in one who looks upon the universe with the aid of astronomical discovery and theory. Such a person may well feel “lost, confounded, overwhelmed, with the vastness of the spectacle” . . . “the distance between him and the

- 5 Yea, Thou hast made him a little lower than God,  
 And Thou crownest him with glory and honour.  
 6 Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of  
 Thy hands ;  
 Thou hast put all things under his feet ;  
 7 Sheep and oxen, all of them,  
 Yea, and the beasts of the field,  
 8 The fowls of heaven and the fishes of the sea,  
 (And whatsoever) passeth through the paths of the seas.  
 9 Jehovah our Lord,  
 How excellent is Thy Name in all the earth !

Creator appears to be increased beyond measure by this disclosure. It seems as if a single individual could have no chance and no claim for the regard of the Ruler of the whole." (Whewell, *Astronomy*, &c. Book iii. chap. iii.)

MAN. The Hebrew word denotes man in his weakness and frailty (see ix. 19, 20), as in the next member SON OF MAN (son of Adam) refers also to his earthly nature as formed out of the ground.

5. But through God's marvellous condescension how *great* is man, little less than Divine in nature, and lord of all creation.

A LITTLE LOWER, lit. "And Thou hast made him to want but little (or, to come short but little) of God."

GLORY AND HONOUR, a common expression for the Divine majesty, and thence for the kingly as a reflection of the Divine. The former word etymologically means dignity, as that which is *weighty* ; the latter represents the external show and splendour.

6. Man is a king. God has put a crown upon his head, and not only so, but has given him a territory and subjects. "All things under his feet," with evident reference to the "let them have dominion," of Gen. i. 26. What David means by all "things" is then explained—beasts, birds, and fishes, which are in the same manner enume-

rated in Gen. i. St. Paul, however, extends the meaning of the "all things" far beyond this. Jesus, as the true Lord of all, shall have a universal dominion. He must reign till He have put all enemies under His feet. But as yet we see not all things put under Him. Sin, and death, and hell are up in arms against Him, and these are yet to be subdued. Death, says the Apostle, is the last enemy which shall be destroyed. It is evident, then, that David's "all things" and Paul's "all things" are not the same. The one is thinking of the visible world, the other of the invisible. The one is praising God for His goodness to man in making him lord over beasts, and birds, and fishes ; the other is thinking of a conflict with principalities and powers, which Christ conquers and which man can only conquer in Christ. The one speaks of that which is, the other of that which is to come.

9. The Psalm closes with the same expression of loving admiration with which it opened, but with added emphasis after the singer has told the tale of God's goodness to man : just as the repetition of a passage in music falls more sensibly on the ear, and touches the heart with quicker emotions, than the same passage when it first occurs.

A thousand years later other shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night on the same hills of Bethlehem, while the same stars looked down upon them from heaven. But a brighter glory than the glory of the stars shone round about them ; and they knew better than David himself the meaning of David's words, " Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him ? " For to them it was said by the angel, " Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

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## PSALM IX.

A THANKSGIVING to God, the righteous Judge, who punishes the wicked and defends the cause of the oppressed. Throughout, with the exception of verses 13, 14 (see note *thère*), the Psalm is one continued strain of triumph. Hence, by many it has been regarded as a song of victory, composed perhaps by David at the conclusion of the Syro-Ammonite war, or after one of his victories over the Philistines.

From the times of the LXX. this Psalm has often been considered as forming one poem with the Psalm immediately following. This has arisen probably from the fact that the Tenth Psalm has no superscription, an uncommon thing in the First Book, as well as from the alphabetical arrangement, partially at least discernible in both Psalms, and certain phrases and turns of expression found in both, and not found elsewhere. But this last circumstance only proves that the two Psalms are to be referred to the same author, not that they originally constituted one Poem. And the alphabetical arrangement is exceedingly imperfect, especially in the Tenth Psalm ; nor does it properly complete the defective portion of Psalm ix. Whereas, if we look to the general character of the two,—the first, all triumph and hope ; the last, all prayer against the deeds of violence and blood, which the poet mourns over,—the Hebrew division must certainly be allowed to have much in its favour.

The strophical arrangement is as follows :—

I. (Aleph) Resolve to praise Jehovah. Ver. 1, 2.

II. (Beth, Gimel, He) Reason for this : viz. His righteousness as manifested (*a*) personally. Ver. 3, 4. (*b*) generally. Ver. 5, 6.



III. (Vau) Moreover, Jehovah is the only true and everlasting Judge (ver. 7, 8), and therefore not only the destroyer of the wicked, but the fortress of those that trust in Him. Ver. 9, 10.

IV. (Zain) An exhortation to praise Jehovah because of this His righteousness. Ver. 11, 12.

V. (Cheth) Prayer that this righteousness may be manifested to the singer himself personally. Ver. 13, 14.

VI. (Teth) The destruction of the nations, by being taken in their own devices, a witness to God's righteousness. Ver. 15, 16.

VII. (Yod) Further amplification of this destruction as contrasted with the hope of the poor. Ver. 17, 18.

VIII. (Koph) A prayer that God would yet again declare the majesty of His righteousness, as He had already done in times past. Ver. 19, 20.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. TO THE TUNE "DEATH OF THE SON."  
A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- (Aleph) 1 I WILL give thanks unto Jehovah with my  
whole heart,  
I will tell of all Thy wonderful works ;  
2 I will be glad and exult in Thee,  
I will sing to Thy Name, O Thou Most High;  
(Beth) 3 Because mine enemies are turned backward,  
(Because) they stumble and perish at Thy  
presence.  
4 For Thou hast maintained my right and my  
cause,  
Thou hast sat down on (the) throne, a  
righteous Judge.  
(Gimel) 5 Thou hast rebuked (the) nations, Thou hast  
destroyed the wicked ;  
Their name Thou hast blotted out for ever  
and ever.

1, 2. In this first strophe each line begins with the first letter of the alphabet (Aleph).

2. SING, rendered in our P. B. V. "sing psalms" (E. V. "sing praises").

The verb is from the same root as the noun *mizmor*, "a psalm," and means both "to sing," and "to play."

4. MAINTAINED MY RIGHT, lit. "executed my judgement."

- (He) 6 The enemy is cut off,—they are perpetual ruins ;  
And cities which Thou hast rooted out,—the  
very memorial of them is perished.
- (Vau) 7 And Jehovah sitteth (as King) for ever,  
He hath prepared His throne for judgement :  
8 And He will judge the world in righteousness,  
He will minister justice to the peoples in up-  
rightness,  
9 That so Jehovah may be a high tower to them  
that are crushed,  
A fortress in times of trouble.  
10 And they who know Thy Name shall trust in  
Thee,  
Because Thou hast not forsaken them that seek  
Thee, O Jehovah.
- (Zain) 11 Sing ye to Jehovah, who dwelleth in Zion,  
Declare among the peoples His doings ;  
12 For He who requireth blood remembereth them,  
He hath not forgotten the cry of the afflicted.

8. HE (emphatically) and not any human judge ; the world shall yet see a rule of *righteousness*.

9. THAT SO, *i.e.* by virtue of His righteous exercise of judgement. MAY BE, or rather MAY BECOME, *i.e.* "prove Himself to be" a place of refuge and security.

10. THEM THAT SEEK THEE, not to be paraphrased coldly, that honour Thee, worship Thee, &c. They who seek *God* seek *Him* for Himself ; not like the worshipers of heathen deities, who ask for other things of their gods—wealth, honour, power, &c.

11. Jehovah dwells in Zion. There is the visible seat of His dominion—but that dominion extends to the whole earth, —therefore "publish among the nations His doings." Jehovah is "the Dweller in Zion" since the ark was brought thither, lxxvi. 2.

12. REQUIRETH, or, "maketh in-

quisition for blood" (E.V.), *i.e.* "demandeth satisfaction for bloodshed." This is God's character, as opposed to the scoff of the wicked, "He *requireth* not," x. 4, 13 (where the same verb is used). Like the Goël, the next of kin, who was bound to avenge the murder of his kinsman, so God *calls* the murderer *to account*, *requires satisfaction* at his hand, Gen. ix. 5, Deut. xviii. 19, and in a spiritual sense, Ezek. xxxiii. 6, 8, xxxiv. 10.

THEM, *i.e.* "the afflicted," in the next clause, the pronoun being placed first emphatically.

THE AFFLICTED. This seems at least the primary notion of the word and its kindred form, though they acquire also a moral signification, "the meek, the humble." The *afflicted* in the first instance would be the faithful part of the nation persecuted and oppressed by the ungodly and the power-

- (Cheth) 13 Be gracious unto me, O Jehovah,  
 See mine affliction (which I suffer) from them  
 that hate me,  
 O Thou that liftest me up from the gates of  
 Death,  
 14 That so I may tell all Thy praise in the gates  
 of the daughter of Zion,  
 That I may exult in Thy saving help.
- (Teth) 15 The nations have sunk down in the pit that  
 they made,  
 In the net which they hid is their own foot  
 taken.  
 16 Jehovah hath made Himself known, He hath  
 executed judgement;  
 In the work of His own hands doth He snare  
 the wicked. [Higgaion—Selah.]
- (Yod) 17 The wicked must return to the unseen world,  
 (Even) all the nations that forget God.

ful, and (2) the nation itself, trodden down by foreign tyrants. In either case it is they who through this very discipline learn meekness, submission, resignation, who "in patience possess their souls." In scarcely any instance is the primary meaning altogether in abeyance. In Num. xii. 3, where our Version has "Now the man Moses was very *meek*," &c. the other rendering, *afflicted*, is certainly more in harmony with the context. (See also Num. xi. 11—15, Deut. i. 12.) And so Luther: "Der Mann war *geplagt* vor allen Menschen."

13, 14. These two verses, according to Delitzsch, contain the cry of the afflicted. If we take them as the prayer of the singer himself, they disturb, he thinks, the unity of the Psalm, and interfere awkwardly with its general strain of triumph. But this sudden change of feeling is not uncommon in the Psalms; and the

thought of God as the avenger of all the oppressed, naturally drew forth the prayer that He would look graciously upon the Psalmist himself.

14. IN THE GATES, &c. As the most public place of concourse, this being in the East what the *ἀγορά* was to the Greeks, and the *forum* to the Romans.

17. MUST RETURN. Not "*be turned*," as E.V. The Biblical idea is that of a returning to the dust, taken from the original passage in Gen. iii. 19. Cf. Job xxx. 23, of a return to Sheol (*i.e.* Hades, the unseen world), as here and Ps. xc. 3: "Thou makest man return to destruction," expressions only to be explained by the dimness which then hung over the grave and the life beyond it. The meaning is, that even now, before the eyes of men, God's righteousness shall be seen in cutting off the wicked by a sudden and premature end,

- (Caph) 18 For not for ever shall the poor be forgotten ;  
                   The hope of the afflicted shall not perish  
   eternally.
- (Koph) 19 Arise, O Jehovah, let not mortal man be strong.  
                   Let the nations be judged in Thy sight.
- 20 Put them in fear, O Jehovah ;  
                   Let the nations know that they are but  
   mortal men. [Selah.]

and helping and exalting the right-  
 eous.

19. ARISE. A solemn appeal to  
 God to show Himself to be that which

He is,—the Judge of the earth, with  
 reference perhaps to Num. x. 35. Cf.  
 Ps. iii. 7, vii. 6.

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## PSALM X.

THE Psalmist calls upon God to chastise the unbridled insolence and scorn of the wicked. These have reached such a pitch, that it seems as if God winked at evil. Men are not only doing wickedness, but boasting of their wickedness, and, finding that justice does not overtake them, are acting as if in the conviction that there is no God. The prosperity (ver. 5), security (ver. 6), insolence (ver. 4, 11), deceit (ver. 7), and violence (ver. 8—10) of these despisers of God is vividly portrayed. The Psalm concludes with the triumphant assertion of faith, that despite all seeming disorders, Jehovah *is* King, and that He does hear and answer the cry of the oppressed.

It is impossible to say to what period of Jewish history the Psalm is to be referred. The state of society which it supposes is peculiar. The violent oppressors belonged apparently to heathen nations, who had not yet been finally driven out of the land, but whose speedy destruction the poet anticipates (ver. 16). Compare Psalm ix. 15, 16. In that Psalm, too, in a still more marked manner than in this, “the wicked” and “the (heathen) nations” are identified. See ver. 5, 17, 19, 20. The only limit of time is that furnished by Psalm ix. 11, 14, from which it is certain that the Ark had already been placed on Mount Zion.

On the connection between these two Psalms see the Introduction to Psalm ix.

The Psalm consists of two principal divisions :

I. The first contains a forcible description of the wicked in the full maturity both of his impiety and of his power, together with a complaint to God against him. Ver. 1—11.

II. The second is an appeal to God to arise and show Himself the avenger of the oppressed and the destroyer of the proud. Ver. 12—18.

1. 1 WHY, O Jehovah, standest Thou afar off?

(Why) hidest Thou (Thine eyes) in times of trouble?

2 Through the pride of the wicked the afflicted is hotly vexed;

They are taken in the devices they have imagined.

3 For the wicked boasteth of his soul's desire,  
And he blesseth the robber; he despiseth Jehovah.

4 The wicked, such is his scornfulness, (saith) "He requireth not."

"There is no God," is the sum of his devices.

5 His ways are sure at all times:

Thy judgements are far above out of his sight:

As for all his adversaries, he puffeth at them.

1. STANDEST . . . AFAR OFF, *i.e.* like an idle passive spectator, unconcerned at the misery which he sees but refuses to relieve. See xxii. 1, 11—19; xxxv. 22; xxxviii. 11—21.

HIDEST, viz. "Thine eyes." So the ellipse is to be supplied. See Is. i. 15. The same phrase is used of men who leave wickedness unpunished (Lev. xx. 4; 1 Sam. xii. 3), or who disregard the misery of others (Prov. xxviii. 27).

2. THE AFFLICTED or "humble." See on ix. 12.

4. All the older versions render, "the wicked in (or, according to) his pride (lit. height of his nostril) will not inquire," viz. after God—never troubles himself, that is, whether God approves his conduct or not. But the other interpretation, which makes the words "He (*i.e.* God) will not require"

the words of the evil-doer, accords better with the clause following, and also with the similar expression, ver. 13, "He hath said in his heart, 'Thou wilt not require.'"

THERE IS NO GOD: not that he is literally an atheist, but that the whole of his conduct, all his purposes and schemes, are carried on as if there were no God,—in a *practical* denial of His existence. See xiv. 1. Others render: "All his *thoughts* are, There is no God;" but the noun properly means *schemes, devices*, rather than *thoughts*.

5. FAR ABOVE. The expression is just the opposite to xviii. 22, "all His judgements are before me;" whereas they are so far out of the sight of the wicked, that he acts as if they could never reach him. See Job xxii. 12, &c.

- 6 He saith in his heart: "I cannot be moved ;  
From one generation to another I shall have no  
misfortune."
- 7 Of cursing is his mouth full, of deceit and oppression.  
Under his tongue is mischief and iniquity.
- 8 He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages,  
In secret corners doth he slay the innocent ;  
His eyes are privily set against the helpless.
- 9 He lurketh in his hiding-place, as a lion in his lair ;  
He lurketh to catch the afflicted ;  
He doth catch the afflicted, drawing him in his net.
- 10 So he is crushed, sinks down and falls ;  
The helpless (perish) by means of his strength.
- 11 He saith in his heart : "God hath forgotten ;  
He hath hidden His face ; He will never see it."

II. (Koph) 12 Arise, O Jehovah ! O God, lift up Thine  
hand !

Forget not the afflicted.

13 Wherefore should the wicked despise God ?

7. CURSING ; apparently, from what follows, "perjury" (though the word does not of itself mean this), reckless false swearing in order to effect his evil purposes. See lix. 12, and Hos. iv. 2, in both which passages the same words "swearing and lying" occur together, as here "swearing and deceit."

UNDER HIS TONGUE,—not to be explained by a reference to the poison-bag of serpents, because the same phrase occurs also in a good sense, lxi. 17, Cant. iv. 11. Just in the same sense, "upon the tongue," xv. 3, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

8. VILLAGES. The word is explained, Lev. xxv. 31, to mean a collection of houses not inclosed within a wall. But it is doubtful whether the villages are mentioned because, from their defenceless state, it was easier there to plunder and kill ; or whether by these

villages are meant the haunts of the robbers themselves, the places *in which* they lurked, not *against which* they formed their designs ; nomad encampments of predatory Bedouins who thence fell upon helpless travellers. This last seems more probable. Compare Gen. xxv. 16.

9. There is some confusion in the metaphors employed. The wicked is compared first to the lion watching for his prey, and then to the hunter taking wild animals in his net. Whereas, again in ver. 10 we seem to have the image of the wild beast crushing his prey.

12—18. Second principal division of the Psalm, in which the poet (1) cries earnestly to God for help and vengeance upon his enemies (12—15) ; and then (2) expresses his confidence that his prayer has been heard (16—18).

13. The argument is that God's

(Wherefore should he) say in his heart, "Thou wilt not require (it)?"

(Resh) 14 Thou hast seen (it); for THOU considerest mischief and vexation,

That (men) may put (the matter) into Thy hand.

The helpless leaveth (it) to Thee:

Thou hast been the helper of the orphan.

(Shin) 15 Break Thou the arm of the wicked; and as for the evil man,

When his wickedness is sought for, let it no more be found.

16 Jehovah is King for ever and ever:

The nations have perished out of His land.

honour is concerned in the reproach which is brought against it by the success of the wicked.

WHEREFORE SHOULD, &c. lit. "Wherefore hath the wicked despised God?"

14. THOU HAST SEEN (IT). An emphatic energetic protest against the words immediately preceding, and also with a reference to the "He will never see," ver. 11, throwing back the word in the mouth of the wicked. (Cf. xxxv. 22.) There is a time coming, he feels assured, when all this disorder will be set right. God is not the passive spectator of human affairs which these men deem Him. He "considers" (*i.e.* regards with interest and sympathy) what is going on. See the same word, xxxiii.

13, lxxx. 14, Hab. i. 3, 13, and in many other passages. The helpless, therefore, may leave all to God;—and with the more confidence, because God *has been* the helper of those who, like the orphan, are deprived of human protectors. This appeal to past experiences is always a ground of confidence. The road we are now travelling may be very dark, but let us look back, and on some spot which we have passed we shall see the light shining.

15. WHEN HIS WICKEDNESS, &c. Ordinarily such an expression might seem to denote a wish that his wickedness should be forgiven on repentance, but that clearly is not the sense here. The meaning must be, "Let the wicked and his wickedness disappear, so that even when sought for it cannot be found." "To seek and not find" is a proverbial expression, signifying that an object has utterly perished or disappeared, so as to leave no trace of its existence. See xxxvii. 36, Is. xli. 12.

16. The triumph of faith, which, knowing that Jehovah is King, already sees by anticipation His righteous judgement executed. The bold plunderers who have so long infested the land are already swept away, says the singer, so sure is he of the issue. The land, which is Jehovah's land, must "be purged of all evil-doers," as once of the Canaanites, who were driven out. Israel may be "mightily oppressed," as by Sisera of old, but God will hear his cry, and give strength to his trembling heart (ver. 17), and so manifest His power that these tyrants who, with all their boasting, are but weak mortal men (ver. 18), shall no longer oppress His people.

(Tau) 17 The desire of the afflicted hast Thou heard, O  
 Jehovah ;  
 Thou establishest their heart ;  
 Thine ear hearkeneth (unto them),  
 18 That Thou mayest judge (the cause of) the orphan  
 and the oppressed,  
 So that mortal man of the earth may no more  
 terrify.

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## PSALM XI.

THE singer is in danger of his life ; and timorous and faint-hearted counsellors would fain persuade him to seek safety in flight. But, full of unshaken faith in God, he rejects their counsel, believing that Jehovah the righteous King, though He tries His servants, does not forsake them. Not the righteous, but the wicked have need to fear. The Psalm is so short and so general in its character, that it is not easy to say to what circumstances in David's life it should be referred. The choice seems, however, to lie between his persecution by Saul and the rebellion of his son Absalom. Delitzsch decides for the last, and thinks the counsel (ver. 1), "flee to your mountain," comes from the mouth of friends who were anxious to persuade the king to betake himself, as he had before done when hunted by Saul, to "the rocks of the wild goats" (1 Sam. xxiv. 2). It is in favour, to some extent, of this view that the expression in ver. 3, "when the foundations are destroyed," points to a time when lawful authority was subverted.

The Psalm consists of two strophes, which may be briefly characterised :—

I. The timid counsels of the faint-hearted. Ver. 1—3.

II. The answer of faith. Ver. 4—7.

The first strophe, however, it should be observed, opens with the calm assertion of confident trust, before we hear a word of expostulation with those whose advice the Psalmist rejects.



[FOR THE PRECENTOR. (A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

- 1 IN Jehovah have I found refuge:  
How say ye to my soul:  
"Flee ye to your mountain, (like) a bird;
- 2 For lo! the wicked bend the bow,  
They have aimed their arrow upon the string,  
To shoot in the dark at them that are upright in heart.
- 3 When the foundations are destroyed,  
What can the righteous do?"
- 4 Jehovah is in His holy temple;  
Jehovah,—His throne is in heaven:

1. IN JEHOVAH—under the shadow of His wings (xxxvi. 7)—HAVE I FOUND REFUGE; I need no other refuge: how *can* ye say to me, &c.; my feet are on the true Rock, why should I look elsewhere for safety? This is the full force of the expression. There is moreover a force in the perfect, "I *have* found." It is an exclamation of joyful confidence in the thought that he *has* such a refuge, it is not yet to seek. The advice here given and which he repels is that of timid and desponding friends, who would persuade him that all is lost, and that the highest wisdom is to yield to circumstances, and to seek safety not in resistance but in flight. But in fact the voice which thus speaks is the voice of the natural heart, of the selfish and therefore shortsighted and cowardly instinct, which always asks first, not What is right? but, What is safe? The advice may be well meant, but it is unworthy. (Cf. iii. 3, iv. 8.) This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. But it is often a sorer trial for faith to have to withstand the pleadings of well-meaning friends than to arm itself against open enemies.

TO YOUR MOUNTAIN. This partly perhaps follows the image of the bird,

"which, when hunted on the plain, betakes itself to the woods and mountains" (De Wette); but the mountains, caves, and fastnesses of Palestine would be the natural hiding-place of, persons in danger. (Cf. Judg. vi. 2, 1 Sam. xiii. 6, 1 Macc. ii. 28, Matt. xxiv. 16.)

2. Observe the change of tense: "they *are* bending; nay, they *have* already *aimed*." The image here used of the bird pursued by the hunters reminds us of what David says to Saul, 1 Sam. xxvi. 20, "The king hath come to seek me, as when one hunteth a partridge in the mountains"

4—7. The answer of Faith, the glance directed from earth to heaven, the full trust in the righteous and all-seeing Lord, the confidence that whatever the apparent confusion and disorder of the lower world, there is an Eye that sees and a Hand that directs all, that even the suffering of the righteous is part of a Divine purpose of love.

HOLY TEMPLE, used not only of the Temple or Tabernacle in Jerusalem (see on v. 7), but also of the heavenly temple, xviii. 6, xxix. 9, Is. vi., Hab. ii. 20, Mic. i. 2. Here the parallelism would rather favour the latter.

- His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men.  
 5 Jehovah trieth the righteous,  
 But the wicked and him that loveth violence doth  
 His soul abhor.  
 6 May He rain upon the wicked snares,  
 Fire and brimstone, and a burning wind, as the por-  
 tion of their cup.  
 7 For righteous is Jehovah, He loveth righteousness ;  
 They that are upright shall behold His face.

5. TRIETH. The same verb as in the previous verse, but used here in a more definite sense with reference to the result of the trial : puts them into the furnace (the word is used of the testing of metals), that they may come forth as pure gold. Cf. xvii. 3, Job xxiii. 10.

6. The figures in this verse are borrowed from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

SNARES. The word presents some difficulty. It seems a harsh metaphor to speak of raining snares, especially in immediate juxtaposition with fire and brimstone. Still we must recollect that the Hebrew poets were not always careful to avoid incongruity of metaphor. We have immediately following a metaphor of an entirely different kind, "the portion of their cup."

7. Thus Faith kindles into Hope. Not only does David make Jehovah his refuge in calamity, but he can rejoice in the thought that he shall behold the face of God,—behold now the light of His countenance even in the midst of gloom and darkness. (Cf. iv. 8, xxi. 7.) Did his hope reach beyond this, and are we to suppose that here he looks forward to seeing God in the resurrection? We cannot tell. But see xvi. 11, xvii. 15. To us, however, his words may be the expression of a "hope full of immortality." "We know that our light affliction worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." We know that "when He shall appear . . . we shall see Him as He is."

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## PSALM XII.

THIS, according to the title, is one of David's Psalms ; but there is nothing in the circumstances, so far as we know them, of his history, which can lead us to associate the Psalm with any particular period. Tholuck thinks it is aimed at persons by whom David

was surrounded in the court of Saul. Others suppose that it was occasioned by the treachery of the Ziphites, 1 Sam. xxiii. 19, and xxvi. 1, or the treachery of Ahithophel in Absalom's rebellion, 2 Sam. xvii. 1. But it is not one or two prominent individuals whose conduct forms the burden of the Psalmist's complaint. He is evidently smarting from the falseness and hypocrisy of the time. The defection which he deplores is a national defection. Like Elijah in the deserts, he feels himself alone. "There is not one godly man left: the true-hearted are cut off." A taint has spread through society (to use the modern expression, for which the Hebrew poet says, "this generation"). Falsehood is everywhere: truth nowhere. The heart of men is double; their lips are flattering lips (ver. 3). And whilst they utter slander, hypocrisy, and lies, they boast of their power; and not only give their tongues licence, but justify the licence: "Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

Now this utter hollowness and insincerity are very hard to bear. The few who, in the midst of the general corruption, still retain their integrity are persecuted, and sigh for deliverance. This deliverance is promised them in the form of a Divine interposition. The singer, filled with the Spirit of prophecy, consoles himself, and those afflicted like himself, not in his own words, but in the words of God (ver. 6). And then remembering how pure those words are, how unalterably true—not like the words of men which *seem* so fair, but *are* false—he feels that there he can rest, calm in the conviction that, though the wicked walk on every side, Jehovah will save them that love Him from all their machinations (ver. 8).

Both the circumstances of the Psalmist and his prayer are very similar to what we find in the two immediately preceding Psalms. The belief here expressed as to the overthrow of the wicked (ver. 5—8) may be compared with xi. 5—7. In the latter passage that belief is based upon God's *character* as a righteous God. In this Psalm it rests apparently upon a special *promise*, but in fact upon God's *word*. But God's word teaches us what God's character is. The difference therefore is formal, not real.

The Psalm then consists of two principal divisions:—

I. A complaint. Ver. 1—4.

II. The answer to that complaint. Ver. 5—7.

These two principal sections may be further subdivided as follow:—

I. (1) The cry for help because

(a) good men are nowhere to be found ; and

(b) lies, and flattery, and insincerity prevail. Ver. 1, 2.

(2) The prayer that flatterers and liars may be destroyed. Ver. 3, 4.

II. (3) God's promise of help in answer to the cry for help : and the Psalmist's Amen. Ver. 5, 6.

(4) The assurance and hope built upon the promise. Ver. 7, 8.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. UPON THE OCTAVE\* (A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

1 SAVE, Jehovah, for the good man ceaseth,

For the faithful fail from among the children of men.

2 They speak vanity, every one with his neighbour ;

With flattering lips and a double heart do they speak.

3 May Jehovah cut off all flattering lips,

(And) the tongue that speaketh great things,

4 Which say : " With our tongue we are strong,

Our lips are our own : who is lord over us ? "

5 " For the desolation of the afflicted,

For the deep sighing of the poor,

#### I. THE GOOD . . . THE FAITHFUL.

Amenfolk according to Luther, *i.e.* those whose heart towards God and their neighbours is true and earnest, like the Amen of a prayer.

2. THEY SPEAK VANITY, *i.e.* emptiness, untruth (as xli. 6 ; cxliv. 8, 11).

#### EVERY ONE WITH HIS NEIGHBOUR.

See the exact opposite of this enjoined, Eph. iv. 25, and the duty grounded on the fact that we are members one of another. But the word " neighbour " must not be pressed. " Neighbour " and " brother " are used in Hebrew without thinking of the exact relation implied in the words, where we should simply say " another. "

3, 4. At first thought there seems to

be a contradiction in speaking of *flattering* lips, and a tongue that speaketh *great*, *i.e.* proud words. But only at first thought. The men here described are evidently men occupying a high position, smooth and supple courtiers, perfect in the art of dissembling, yet glorying too in their power of saying what they list, however atrocious the falsehood or the calumny.

5. A remarkable instance of the close affinity between the Poet and the Prophet among the Hebrews. Each, though in different ways, was the teacher of that Eternal Truth which he received from God. And this, by the way, suggests to us what every

\* See note on inscription of Psalm VI.

Now will I arise," saith Jehovah,

"I will set him in the safety for which he longeth."

6 The words of Jehovah are pure words,

(Like) silver fined in a furnace in the earth, purified seven times.

7 Thou, O Jehovah, wilt keep them,

Thou wilt preserve us from this generation for ever.

8 The wicked walk to and fro on every side,

When a rabble lifts itself up over the children of men.

true Poet should be. Broadly speaking, the difference lay here, that the Poet gave utterance to the longings, aspirations, fears, doubts, anxieties of *man's* heart; whereas the Prophet was commissioned to address himself directly to the people, as conveying to them the message *of God*. The one represented, so to speak, the human side of the truth—what man feels and is; the other the Divine—what God is and requires. The one speaks for man to God; the other for God to man. Here, however, David, instead of expressing his own feeling of confidence that God will answer him, seems as it were to hear God himself speaking ("Deum ipsum inducit loquentem," *Calvin*). See the prophetic counterpart of this, Is. xxxiii. 10.

6. The poet dwells on the purity and perfect truth of God's promises, not only as opposed to all lying lips of men (though that, I believe, was in his mind), but also that he may thus more deeply print upon the heart of

the afflicted the certain fulfilment of the promise. This emphatic assertion was rendered necessary by the widespread and apparently long-prevailing corruption. For those who were weak in faith might begin to doubt whether the truth of God itself had not failed.

7. The faith and hope which rest upon the fact just before stated, that the words of Jehovah are pure words.

THEM, *i.e.* "the afflicted and poor," in ver. 5. In the second clause, the pronoun in the Hebrew is in the singular used distributively, "him," *i.e.* each one of them.

THIS GENERATION, spoken of those who not only live in the same age, but are pervaded by the spirit of that age. So Is. liii. 8. Here, the world as opposed to the Church.

8. This verse is no doubt perplexing; this return to gloom and doubt is, I believe, without parallel at the conclusion of a Psalm.

## PSALM XIII.

IN this Psalm we see a servant of God long and sorely tried by the persecutions of unrelenting enemies, and, as it seems to himself, forgotten and forsaken of God, pouring out the agony of his soul in prayer. It is a long and weary struggle, it is a daily and hourly martyrdom; and wrestling with his despair, he can but cry (like the souls under the altar, Rev. vi. 10), *How long?* And then calmer words of prayer rise to his lips, ver. 3, 4. And at last faith asserts her perfect victory (ver. 5). The rapid transition of feeling, from a depth of misery bordering on despair, to hope, and even joy, is very remarkable.

We have three strophes :—

I. The first is “the deep sighing” of a heart overwhelmed with the agony of its despair. Ver. 1, 2.

II. The calmer supplication succeeds, as if the very utterance of its grief had made the burden less. Ver. 3, 4.

III. Prayer kindles into hope, lighted up with something even of joy. Ver. 5.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

1 How long, O Jehovah, wilt Thou forget me for ever?

How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?

2 How long must I take counsel in my soul,

1. It is quite unnecessary to point thus: “How long wilt Thou forget me? for ever?” as if there were two distinct questions. (See the same double question, lxxix. 5; lxxxix. 46.) It is natural to a perturbed and doubting heart thus to express itself, in a confused and almost contradictory manner. In its despair it thinks “God hath forgotten me:” and yet out of the very midst of its despair there rises up the conviction,—“No, not for

ever;” and then its hopelessness is changed to expostulation, “How long wilt Thou forget me?” We may, if we choose it, paraphrase, “How long wilt Thou *make as if* Thou wouldst forget me for ever?”

2. The “how long” four times repeated; for the long duration of the conflict is here the sting of the Poet’s grief.

HOW LONG MUST I TAKE COUNSEL?  
Lit. “put counsels or deliberations in

(Having) sorrow in my heart daily ?

How long shall mine enemy lift up himself against me ?

3 Consider,—answer me, O Jehovah my God,

Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the (sleep of) death.

4 Lest mine enemy say : “ I have prevailed against him ; ”  
(Lest) mine adversaries exult because I am moved.

5 But as for me—in Thy loving-kindness have I trusted ;  
Let my heart exult in Thy salvation :

Let me sing to Jehovah, because He hath dealt bountifully with me.

my soul.” This strikingly describes the helpless embarrassment of the sufferer. Plan after plan suggests itself, is resolved upon, and then abandoned in despondency as utterly unavailing. Well must David have understood what this was, when, hunted by Saul, he knew not where to betake himself, at one time seeking refuge among the Moabites, at another in the wilderness of Ziph ; now an outlaw hiding himself in the cave of Adullam, and anon a captain in the service of the King of the Philistines ; and amid all his projects, haunted by the mournful conviction, “ I shall now one day perish by the hand of Saul.”

SORROW IN MY HEART. Not only parallel to, but flowing from “ counsels in my soul,” the burden of a heart saddened by its own thoughtfulness.

3. The lamentation now passes into prayer ; and to the fourfold complaint of the first strophe answers the fourfold petition of the second, though the several members of the one do not exactly correspond to the several members of the other.

CONSIDER ; “ look upon me,” opposed to the hiding of the face, *1 b.*

ANSWER ME, opposed to the forgetting, *1 a.* First, look ; then, hear and succour. “ Thus,” says Calvin, “ does the Holy Ghost purposely accommodate the forms of prayer to our feelings.” First, we must have the conviction that God sees us, and then we can cry to Him ; first the assurance that He *is*, and then that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

LIGHTEN MINE EYES,\* said not of spiritual but of physical support, as is clear from what follows, “ lest I sleep the sleep of death ; ” and also from the other passages where the same idiom occurs, *1 Sam. xiv. 27* and *29* (where the eyes of Jonathan are said to be enlightened, when, after being reduced to the extremity of faintness, he partakes of food).

5. Supplication passes into the expression of a joyful confidence. Faith, strengthened by prayer, rises above the present with its sorrows, and sees what is not as though it were : and hopes yet to praise God with a song because of His goodness.

IN THY LOVING-KINDNESS, not in personal merit, nor in the justice of my cause.

\* It is related that a child scarcely four years old (Princess Anne, daughter of Charles I.) died with these words on her lips, “ Lighten mine eyes, O Lord God ! and let me not sleep the sleep of death.”

## PSALM XIV.

THE feeling expressed in this Psalm is in some measure the same which, as we have already seen, must have given occasion to the Twelfth Psalm. The singer, keenly alive to the evils of his time, sees everything in the blackest colours. The apostasy is so wide-spread that all are involved in it, except the small remnant (implied in ver. 4); and the world seems again ripe for judgement as in the days of Noah (ver. 2).

Both in this Psalm and in Psalm xii. the complaint is made that the wicked oppress and devour the righteous. In both, corruption has risen to its most gigantic height, but here the *doings* of bad men, there their *words*, form the chief subject of complaint.

There is nothing in the Psalm which can lead us to fix its date or authorship precisely. The feeling is common enough at all times in men of earnest mind. Filled with a holy jealousy for God, no age seems to them so corrupt as their own, because they are engaged in perpetual and, as they are apt to think, hopeless encounter with its evils. Indeed, despair would be the result, did not the promise of the future lift them above the present (ver. 7).

This Psalm appears again with some variations, especially in ver. 5, 6, as Psalm liii. It is not certain which of the two may claim the merit of being the original poem. Its place in the collection may incline us to give this the preference. And the change in the Fifty-third might very well have been introduced to adapt it to the peculiar circumstances of the time.

The Psalm cannot be broken up into strophes; but the first verse answers to the third, and the second to the fourth.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. (A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

I THE fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

I. THE FOOL. Thus the Bible ever speaks of those who have cast off the fear of God. They are those whose understanding is darkened; who, pro-

fessing themselves to be wise, become fools. Such men, who make a boast of their reason and would fain walk by the light of their reason, prove how



Corrupt, abominable are they in their doing ;  
There is none that doeth good.

2 Jehovah hath looked down from heaven upon the  
children of men,

To see if there be any that hath understanding,  
That seeketh after God.

3 They are all turned away, together they have become  
corrupt :

There is none that doeth good ; no, not one.

4 " Have they no knowledge, all the workers of iniquity,  
Who eat my people, (as) they eat bread,  
(And) call not on Jehovah ? "

little their reason is worth. The epithet is the more cutting, because persons of this kind generally lay claim to more than ordinary discernment.

IN HIS HEART. Rather a practical than a theoretical atheism; not so much a denial of the *being* of a God as a denial of His *moral government* of the world (cf. x. 5) ; and this evinced in their actions rather than in their words. Their lives show what the thought of their hearts is (as indeed immediately follows). " The fool " is not the philosophic atheist with his arguments ; but the man who by the *practice of wickedness* so stifles and corrupts within him the knowledge of God that he *virtually* acknowledges no God.

2, 3. God appears as Witness and Judge of what is done upon earth.

LOOKED DOWN. The word used strictly of looking out of a window, 2 Kings ix. 30 ; and again of God looking upon the earth, cii. 19. As " they have corrupted," reminds us of the Flood (" all flesh hath corrupted his way on the earth," Gen. vi. 12), so this " looking down " reminds us of the Tower of Babel, Gen. xi. 5.

3. NO, NOT ONE. " See," says Luther, " how many words he uses

that he may comprehend all, excluding none. First he says *all*, then *together*, and then *no, not one*." This and the two previous verses are quoted freely by St. Paul (he does not adhere even to the LXX.) in Rom. iii. 10, &c., in proof of his position, that Jews as well as Gentiles are under sin. As his argument is at this point addressed particularly to the Jew, he reasons, not from the sense of sin or the voice of conscience, but from the Scriptures, whose authority the Jew acknowledged. The Jew would, of course, admit the inference as to the state of the Gentile world.

4. God Himself is introduced as speaking.

NO KNOWLEDGE, used absolutely as in Is. i. 3. " Israel doth not know," is stupid like the brutes.

WHO EAT, lit. " who, eating my people, eat bread ; " who so far from being conscious of their guilt, devour the righteous with the same unconsciousness with which they would take their accustomed meal. See the figure still further carried out, Mic. iii. 1—3. Cf. also for similar expressions, Jer. x. 21, Hos. vii. 7, in both of which passages the evil-doers are described (as here) as men who do not pray,

- 5 There were they in great fear ;  
     For God is in the generation of the righteous.  
 6 Though ye shame the counsel of the afflicted,  
     Yet Jehovah is his refuge.  
 7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion !  
     When Jehovah bringeth back the captivity of His  
     people,  
     Then may Jacob exult, then may Israel be glad.

“they call not upon Jehovah ;” therefore are they so brutish. But see further on liii. 4.

6. *THOUGH YE SHAME*, or “ye may put to shame” (yet ye shall not succeed), for God, &c. The A.V. is clearly wrong in rendering, “Ye *have* shamed,” as if the verb were in the past tense.

THE COUNSEL OF THE AFFLICTED, *i.e.* all that is done by those who bear the reproach of Christ to advance God’s glory upon earth. The children of the world cannot bring all this to nought, for in fighting against the righteous they fight against God, who is in the midst of them.

## PSALM XV.

THIS Psalm is commonly supposed to have been written on the occasion of the removal of the Ark to Zion, and the consecration of the Tabernacle there, 2 Sam. vi. 12--19. (Cf. 1 Chron. xv. 16.) The subject of the Psalm, and the occurrence of a similar question and answer in xxiv. which was certainly composed for that occasion, might indeed dispose us to adopt this view.

On the other hand, the name “holy mountain” (ver. 1), as applied to Zion, would rather suggest a later date. It was the removal of the Ark thither which made the mountain holy.

The form of the Psalm is very simple. Properly speaking, it has no strophes or divisions. It is a question (ver. 1), and an answer to the question (ver. 2—5). It teaches simply what is the condition of man’s approach to God with acceptance. There is implied in it, no doubt, that all merely outward service is vain ; but the Psalm can scarcely be said to be specially directed (like Psalm l.) against lip service and hypocritical worship. It describes rather the perfect character, the man who can draw near to God and live in His presence.

## [A (PSALM) OF DAVID.]

- 1 JEHOVAH, who may sojourn in Thy tabernacle?  
 Who may dwell on Thy holy mountain?  
 2 He that walketh perfectly, and worketh righteousness,  
 And speaketh truth in his heart;  
 3 (That) hath not slandered with his tongue,  
 Hath done no evil to his friend,  
 Nor taken up a reproach against his neighbour;  
 4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned,  
 But he honoureth them that fear Jehovah;  
 (Who) sweareth to (his own) hurt, and changeth not;

1. That this Psalm is no mirror for the self-righteous to see themselves in, is evident from its first word, JEHOVAH. It is in the presence of God and in the light of God that the singer draws his portrait of the godly man. In His sight neither the hypocrite nor the formalist can stand. And on this account, and not as a mere matter of form, does David direct his question to God. The answer is not to be considered as if coming from the heavenly oracle, but the Poet himself gives it, speaking by the light of the Spirit of God, as cast upon his own heart, upon the word of God, and upon the world about him. So the Anglo-Saxon Version paraphrases: "Then the Lord answered the prophet through inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the prophet said: I know, yet I ask, who dwells there?" &c.

TABERNACLE . . . . HOLY MOUNTAIN. These words must not be explained away as mere figures of speech. TABERNACLE does not mean merely "dwelling," as when it is said, "The tabernacle of God shall be with men," nor can we with Venema interpret the HOLY MOUNTAIN as merely equivalent to a safe and indestructible abode. It always means Zion, and nothing else.

2, 3. The man with whom God will hold communion is now described, first as to what he is (ver. 2), and then as to what he is not (ver. 3).

(a) He *is* a man (1) of whole heart and life; (2) who does the will of God; and (3) speaks the truth because he loves it: it dwells in his heart, and he speaks it there first, before he speaks it with his tongue. "It is a beautiful order," says Luther. "First the person must be acceptable by cleanness (alluding to the Vulg. translation, *qui ingreditur sine macula*); then the work by righteousness; then the word by truth. So God has regard to Abel (himself) first, and then to his gifts."

(b) He is *not* one who injures others either (1) by word; or (2) by deed; or (3) by listening to and propagating slander. This is, I think, the meaning of this last clause.

4, 5. Again, his character is further described by affirmations and negations.

(a) He *is* one who turns away from the evil and honours the good, who regards as inviolable the sanctity of an oath (not a casuist who sets himself to find a pretext for breaking his word, when it is inconvenient to keep it).

5 Who hath not put out his money to usury,  
 Nor taken a reward against the innocent.  
 He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

(b) He is *not* one who loves usury or takes bribes. The taking of usury is strictly forbidden in the Law (Exod. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv. 36, &c.), and denounced by the Prophets (Is. xxxiii. 15, "gain of oppressions;" Ezek. xviii. 8, 13, xxii. 12, &c.).

Thus, in heart, in tongue, in actions, in his conduct, as a member of society, he is alike free from reproach.

Such is the figure of stainless honour drawn by the pen of a Jewish poet. Christian chivalry has not dreamed of a brighter. We have need often and seriously to ponder it. For it shows us that faith in God and spotless integrity may not be sundered; that religion does not veil or excuse petty dishonesties; that love to God is only

then worthy the name when it is the life and bond of every social virtue. Each line is, as it were, a touchstone to which we should bring ourselves. To speak truth in the heart—to take up no reproach against a neighbour—would not the Christian man be perfect of whom this could be said? And that other trait in this divine character, "who honoureth them that fear the Lord"—is there a surer test of our spiritual condition than this, that we love and honour men *because they love Christ*?

The Epistle of St. James is the New Testament expansion of, and comment upon, this Psalm. For another treatment of the same subject in the Old, see Is. xxxiii. 13—16.

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## PSALM XVI.

SOME have supposed that this Psalm was written by David in time of peril, both because of the prayer with which it opens, "Keep me," &c., and because of the conviction expressed in ver. 10. But if so, the thought of peril is quite swallowed up in the consciousness of God's presence and love. The Psalm is bright with the utterance of a happiness which nothing earthly can touch. It expresses the conviction of a life rather than of any sudden emergency. The living God himself is David's portion and inheritance (ver. 5, 6)—stands at his right hand (ver. 8)—is the joy of his heart now (ver. 9)—and will fill him with joy and gladness for evermore.

A comparison of the Psalm with 1 Sam. xxvi. 19 might suggest that it was written by David when he was in the wilderness of Ziph. "They have driven me out this day," he says, "from the inheritance of Jehovah, saying, Go, serve other gods."

But a few words on the prophecy contained in the latter part of the Psalm. That we have here a prediction, and moreover a *conscious* prediction on the part of David, is distinctly affirmed by St. Peter, speaking under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost (Acts ii. 30, 31). The language which he uses is very remarkable. Alleging ver. 8—11 in proof of the resurrection of Christ, he tells us that David here spoke as a prophet; that he *knew* that his great descendant would be the Messiah, and that God would place Him on his throne; and that he *foresaw* and spake of the resurrection of Christ. It is plain from all this that, according to St. Peter's view, David not only uttered words which *might* be applied to Christ, but that he used prophetic, that is, inspired language, and knew himself that he was prophesying. But we may still allow a primary and lower reference of the words to David himself, without lessening their prophetic import; in some parts even an exclusive reference, for it is not necessary (and indeed seems scarcely possible) to refer the *whole* Psalm to Christ because a part of it points to Him.

## [A MIGHTY\* OF DAVID.]

- 1 KEEP me, O God; for I have found refuge in Thee.
- 2 I said to Jehovah, "Thou art my Lord:  
I have no good beyond Thee,—
- 3 Of the saints who are in the land,  
And the excellent in whom is all my delight.
- 4 Their sorrows shall be many who take another (god)  
instead (of Jehovah)—

3. THE SAINTS. In God's land there are others who, like David himself, cleave to God, and with these he claims fellowship. "The saints" are all Israel, set apart as a nation, and severed from the surrounding heathen. See the original designation of Israel to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," Exod. xix. 6. See also Deut. vii. 6.

THE EXCELLENT, properly "the outwardly illustrious:" the root-meaning is that of "glitter, splendour," &c. But the same adj. is applied to the name of God in viii. 1, and hence may contain the idea of a moral as well as of a merely outward glory.

4. WHO TAKE, *i.e.* in exchange. The word is properly used of obtaining a

\* This word occurs in the inscription of five other Psalms, lvi.—lx. The meaning has been much questioned, and can, after all, be but a matter of conjecture. Many commentators connect it with the word "gold." "A golden, or precious psalm."

- I will not pour out their drink-offerings of blood ;  
 Neither will I take their names upon my lips.  
 5 Jehovah is the portion of my territory and of my cup.  
 Thou maintainest my lot.  
 6 The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places,  
 Yea, I have a fair heritage.  
 7 I will bless Jehovah who hath given me counsel :  
 Yea in the night-seasons have my reins admonished me.

wife by the payment of a dowry, Exod. xxii. 16.

ANOTHER, *i.e.* a false god, or that which is not God (Is. xlii. 8, xlviii. 11), but purposely, perhaps, put in this indefinite form to signify "all besides God and against God that a man can make an idol of."

With such persons David will have nothing to do. He is joined to the saints, and he holds fast on Jehovah. With the utmost strength of abhorrence, he repudiates the worship, horrid and foul, of the surrounding idolaters.

THEIR DRINK-OFFERINGS OF BLOOD:—not literally consisting of blood, but as associated with bloody rites; or offered with hands stained with innocent blood; or loathsome as if they were of blood.

So deep is David's loathing of idolatry that he will not even pollute his lips by mentioning the names of false gods, in accordance with the command in Exod. xxiii. 13, "The name of other gods ye shall not mention; it shall not be heard in my mouth."

5. AND OF MY CUP. This also depends on the word "portion." See the same expression, "portion of the cup," xi. 6, but there used *in malam partem*. The "cup" seems to be put by synecdoche for the whole meal. He thus speaks of God as the daily food by which he lives. See our Lord's words in John vi., and connect this with the expression of *trust* with which the Psalm opens.

THOU MAINTAINEST MY LOT. Therefore no creature can rob me of it. Nor is the third comparison unnecessary," says Calvin, "for it often happens that the rightful owners are thrust out from their own possession, because there is none to defend them. But God hath given Himself to us as our inheritance in such wise, that by His aid we are ever maintained in the enjoyment thereof."

6. THE LINES HAVE FALLEN. In allusion to the ancient custom of marking out plots of land by measuring lines. See the same phrase, Josh. xvii. 5. The line was said to "fall" as being "thrown" by lot. See Micah ii. 5.

7. In the joyful remembrance that he has such a possession, he breaks forth into a strain of thanksgiving.

WHO HATH GIVEN ME COUNSEL, *i.e.* through whose grace I have been enabled to choose Him for my portion (ver. 5, 6). David confesses that he owes his blessedness to God. This is the Divine part: the next clause gives us the human.

MY REINS, here app. = "my heart." (See Job. xix. 27, "my reins in my bosom.") God has led me to find my joy in Him, and now in the night-seasons, as the time most favourable to quiet thought, I meditate thereon. The heart itself is said to admonish, because it anxiously listens to the voice of God, and seeks to conform itself thereto.

8 I have set Jehovah before me always ;

Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

9 Therefore hath my heart rejoiced, and my glory  
exulted ;

Yea my flesh shall dwell in safety ;

10 For Thou wilt not leave my soul to the unseen world ;

Thou wilt not suffer Thy Beloved to see the pit.

11 Thou wilt make me know the path of life ;

8. God in David's eyes is no abstraction, but a person, real, living, walking at his side.

9. MY HEART . . . MY GLORY (*i.e.* soul) . . . MY FLESH ; in other words, the whole man. In like manner "soul," "heart," and "flesh," lxxxiv. 2 ; and "soul" and "flesh," lxiii. 1 ; "heart" and "flesh," lxxiii. 26. "Spirit, soul, and body," 1 Thess. v. 23. FLESH, here as always, *the living body* : it never means *the corpse*. So also the phrase SHALL DWELL IN SAFETY must be understood of *this life*. (See Deut. xxxiii. 28 ; Ps. iv. 8, xxv. 13.) Hence these words as they stand in the Hebrew cannot be regarded as a prophecy that Christ's body should rest safely in the tomb. They are the expression of David's confidence that God would watch over his life, and preserve him from death. In this sense, of course, they are also applicable to our Lord.

10. TO THE UNSEEN WORLD. Not as in our Version, and in that of Luther and others, "*in hell*." David says nothing about what shall happen to him *after* death, but is expressing his conviction that God will not leave him to perish, will not give him up to be the prey of the grave, nor suffer him (as follows in the next clause) to see the pit. See Acts ii. 27. This was still more strikingly true of Christ ; for though He died, God did not leave Him to Hades, did not suffer His soul to *remain* there, or His body to rest in the grave.

THY BELOVED. I have ventured thus to render the word, because it may just as well mean "one who *has obtained favour* of the Lord," as one who *shows love* to God and love to men

11. THE PATH OF LIFE. Not merely, that is, the life of the body. This is shown by the pleasure and the joy spoken of afterwards, which are to be found in God's Presence, and in communion with Him. *Life*, in the only true sense, is union with God ; and from that springs, of necessity, the idea of immortality. It seems impossible to suppose that David, who here expresses such a fulness of confidence in God, such a living personal relationship to Him, could have ever dreamed that such a relationship would end with death. In this Psalm, and in the next, there shines forth the bright hope of everlasting life.

At the same time, in the utterance of this confident persuasion and hope, David was carried beyond himself. He spake as a prophet *knowing* that God had promised of the fruit of his body to raise up Christ to sit on his throne. The hope of his own immortality was based upon, and bound up in, the Life of Him who was at once his Son and his Lord. What was true of David in the lower sense, was true in the fullest and highest sense of Christ ; was only true of David, because it was true of Christ ; and is only true of any of us in and through Him, according to His own

Fulness of joy in Thy Presence,  
Pleasures are at Thy right hand for evermore.

words, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Briefly, then, it must be said that ver. 9—11, so far as they refer to David, express his confidence in God's protecting care in this life and his hope of a life to come. But as a pro-

phesy of Christ they mean all that is drawn from them by St. Peter and St. Paul, Acts xiii. In Christ's deliverance from the grave and His Resurrection, the whole fulness of their meaning is exhausted.

## PSALM XVII.

IN this Psalm, a servant of God, conscious of his own uprightness, and surrounded by enemies, prays to be kept from the evil world, and from evil men who persecute him : and then from the dark present looks forward with joy to the bright future.

Every tried and tempted servant of God may find in it the touchstone whereby to prove himself ; the sure refuge whither to betake himself ; the hope which is the anchor of the soul, and which entereth within the veil. The Psalm may be, as the inscription states, a Psalm of David ; and if so, we may probably attribute its composition to the time of Saul's persecution.

It may be divided into three strophes :—

I. The Psalmist's confidence in his appeal to God. Ver. 1—5.

(a) This is based upon the righteousness of his cause, and the absence of all hypocrisy in his prayer. Ver. 1, 2.

(b) The consciousness of this integrity further declared, and that even on the closest scrutiny. Both heart (ver. 3) and life (ver. 4, 5) are free from reproach, notwithstanding the evil by which he is surrounded.

II. Prayer to be kept in the evil world. Ver. 6—12.

(a) The appeal now lies to God's marvellous loving-kindness and tender affection, that he may be protected against his enemies.

(b) The description of their bitterness (ver. 9), their pride (ver. 10), and their relentless persecution (ver. 11, 12) is then given.



III. The spirit of the world, and the spirit which is of God, Ver. 13—15.

(a) Prayer that the sword of Jehovah may overtake his enemies.

(b) And then the broad contrast, not without its consolation: their portion, at the best, is for this life, and then perishes; mine is in the Presence and the Vision of God, and therefore cannot be taken from me.

[A PRAYER OF DAVID.]

- I. 1 HEAR, O Jehovah, righteousness;  
Hearken to my cry;  
Give ear to my prayer  
Which (is uttered) by no deceitful lips.
- 2 From Thy presence let my judgement go forth;  
Thine eyes behold uprightness.
- 3 Thou hast proved my heart;  
Thou hast visited (me) by night;  
Thou hast tried me (and) findest no evil thought in me,  
Neither doth my mouth transgress.
- 4 As for the doings of men—by the word of Thy lips

1. Not only a righteous cause, but a righteous prayer, offered in all sincerity, with no hypocritical reserve or pretence, are urged as motives why God should hear him.

3. This has given offence to some as an over-bold assertion of innocence. Hence the Jewish interpreters supposed it to have been written by David before his fall. But it is not absolute innocence which the Psalmist here asserts: he is not indulging in self-righteous boasting, but appealing to God as knowing his uprightness of heart and honesty of purpose.

HAST PROVED—HAST TRIED—both words used of the testing of metals, and especially the latter, which means

properly to melt in the fire, so as to separate the dross from the ore.

BY NIGHT, as the season of quiet thought and self-examination. Comp. iv. 4, xvi. 7.

4. THE DOINGS OF MEN, *i.e.* the common course of action of worldly men. "Men" = the great mass of men (opposed to the "doings of Jehovah," xxviii. 5), and here contrasted with "the word of God." Comp. the expression "after the manner of men" (Hos. vi. 7, Job xxxi. 34). Whatever men in general may do or say, I have but one guide and rule of action, viz. Thy word. This is the first mention of the opposition to which he was exposed and of that

I have kept (me from) the ways of the destroyer :  
 5 Holding fast with my goings in Thy paths,  
 My footsteps have not been moved.

II 6 As for me—I have called upon Thee, for Thou  
 answerest me, O God :

Incline Thine ear unto me ; hear my speech.  
 7 Show Thy marvellous loving-kindness O Thou  
 that savest those who find refuge (in Thee)  
 From them that lift themselves up against Thy  
 right hand.

8 Keep me as the apple—as the pupil—of an eye,  
 Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings,  
 9 Because of the wicked who would destroy me,  
 (Because of) mine enemies who eagerly compass me  
 about.

10 They are enclosed in their own fat,  
 With their mouth they speak proudly.

contrast which comes out more clearly in the next strophe, and which is completed in the last.

I HAVE KEPT (ME FROM), lit. "I have watched, observed," but here evidently with the further notion of watching so as to avoid.

5. See Job xxiii. 11, Ps. xli. 12.

6—12. The prayer to be kept in the evil world. The earnest, affectionate cleaving to God, the prayer to be hidden under the shadow of His wings, is proof enough that the former part of the Psalm is no merely self-righteous boast.

7. SHOW, &c., lit. "make wonderful," *i.e.* exhibit in a marked manner Thy loving-kindness, which looks at first sight as if David expected a special miracle to be wrought in his favour. But the notion contained in the verb only expresses the general *well-known* character of God's loving-kindness, which is always wonderful,

and this David desires to experience as others have experienced it before him, as follows.

8. Both the images in this verse, alike expressive of the affection of the Psalmist, and of his deep sense of God's tender care and love to him, are borrowed from the beautiful passage in Deut. xxxii. 10, 11. For the former, see also Zech. ii. 8. The latter occurs frequently. In the New Testament our Lord uses the still more tender image of the hen gathering her brood under her wings (Matt. xxiii. 37).

9. EAGERLY, lit. "with the soul," *i.e.* with the longing desire to destroy me.

10. THEY ARE ENCLOSED, &c. lit. "Their fat have they shut up." This may refer both to the outward condition and the state of heart. These men led a luxurious and selfish life (as is further said, ver. 14), in consequence of which they had become proud and

11 Withersoever we go, have they now surrounded us ;  
 Their eyes do they set to cast (us) down to the  
 earth,

12 Like as a lion that is greedy to ravin,  
 And as a young lion lurking in (his) lair.

III. 13 Arise, O Jehovah, go forth to meet him, cast him  
 down ;

Deliver my soul from the wicked, by Thy sword.

14 From men, O Jehovah, by Thy hand—from men  
 of the world,

Whose portion is in (this) life, and whose belly  
 Thou fillest with Thy treasures,

Who are satisfied with sons, and leave their sub-  
 stance to their children.

unfeeling. For this double meaning of "fatness," comp. on the one hand Deut. xxxii. 15, Job xv. 27, and on the other, Ps. cxix. 70, Isa. vi. 10.

13. If the enemy be thus fierce and powerful, the more need for a powerful protector. The image is a common one in the Psalms, but may have been suggested in the first instance by David's personal experience. See note on iii. 7.

GO FORTH TO MEET HIM, just as David himself went forth, to meet first the lion and then the bear, and afterwards the champion of Gath.

BY THY SWORD, and in ver. 14, BY THY HAND. Not as in E. V. "the wicked which is Thy sword," and in next verse, "men which are Thy hand." David does not here regard the wicked as the sword of God, as Isaiah (x. 5) does the Assyrian as the rod of His anger—a thought which would be quite at variance with the whole scope of the Psalm—but calls upon God to destroy them.

14. MEN OF THE WORLD. The word here used for "world" denotes the transitory nature of the world as a

thing of *time*. Men of the world are those who have made it their home, and who, together with the world and the lust thereof, are passing away. (Comp. "men of the earth," Ps. x. 18.) In the New Testament they are the "world" of St. John, and the "children of the world," Luke xvi. 8. Being thus worldly minded, they have *their portion* in life, *i.e.* in the brief years of their existence upon earth. Then this love of the world is opposed to the love of the Father, not the present to the future, so much as the temporal to the eternal, the world to God. The contrast to "their portion in this life" is to be found in xvi. 5, "Jehovah is my portion ;" and in ver. 15 of this Psalm. On the one side, the Outward, the Transitory, the Unreal : on the other the Inward, the Abiding, the True. We have here a view of the *world* and of *life* very remarkable for the Old Testament—a kind of anticipation of the contrast between the flesh and the spirit which St. Paul gives us, or the love of the world and of God, of which St. John speaks.

15 As for me—in righteousness let me behold Thy face;  
Let me be satisfied, when I awake, with Thine image.

15. Worldly men have their *satisfaction* in this life, in treasures, in children; David hopes to be *satisfied* with the likeness, or rather real, manifest *bodily form* of God. See Num. xii. 8.

WHEN I AWAKE. How are we to understand these words? (1) Certainly not “when I wake up from sleep,” as if there were a reference to the night in ver. 3. Why should David expect a clear vision of God, and especially of His form, on the following morning, or on the morning of any day, more than at any other time? (2) Nor again does he mean by “waking,” a deliverance from the present night of sorrow and suffering, as though he would say, This my sorrow shall pass

away, and then I shall see God as my Deliverer (which may perhaps be the meaning of the hope which Job expresses, chap. xix.). The night might be used as a figure of suffering, but the sufferer would scarcely be said to *sleep* in his suffering, and then to *awake* out of it. I cannot doubt that the reference is to “the waking from the sleep of death,” and therefore to a resurrection. “Waking” from death occurs in 2 Kings iv. 31. Death is spoken of as a sleep from which there is no awaking, Job xiv. 12, Jer. li. 39. Next, Is. xxvi. 19, “Awake—ye that sleep in the dust,” plainly refers to the resurrection. See also Ezekiel xxxvii. 1—14, and Daniel xii. 2.

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## PSALM XVIII.

IN this magnificent hymn the Royal Poet sketches in a few grand outlines the tale of his life—the record of his marvellous deliverances and of the victories which Jehovah had given him—the record, too, of his own heart, the truth of its affection towards God, and the integrity of purpose by which it had ever been influenced. Throughout that singularly chequered life, hunted as he had been by Saul before he came to the throne, and harassed perpetually after he became king by rivals who disputed his authority, and endeavoured to steal away the hearts of his people—compelled to fly for his life before his own son, and engaged afterwards in long and fierce wars with foreign nations—one thing had never forsaken him, the love and the presence of Jehovah. By His help he had subdued every enemy, and

now, in his old age, looking back with devout thankfulness on the past, he sings this great song of praise to the God of his life. With a heart full of love he will tell *how* Jehovah delivered him, and then there rises before the eye of his mind the whole force and magnitude of the peril from which he has escaped. So much the more wonderful appears the deliverance, which accordingly he represents in a bold poetical figure, as a stooping of the Most High from heaven to save him—who comes, as He came of old to Sinai, with all the terror and gloom of earthquake, and tempest, and thick darkness. But God delivers those only who trust in Him, and who are like Him. There must be an inner life of communion with God, if man will know His mercy. Hence David passes on to that covenant relationship in which He had stood to God. He had ever been a true Israelite, and therefore God, the true God of Israel, had dealt with him accordingly. And thus it is at the last that the servant of Jehovah finds his reward. Jehovah, to whom he had ever looked, did not forsake him, but girded him with strength to the battle, and made even distant nations the vassals of his sway.

The hymn concludes as it had opened, with a joyful thanksgiving to Jehovah, who had done so great things for him.

The inscription, which informs us that this hymn was composed towards the end of David's life, is confirmed by the fact that we have the same account given of its composition in 2 Sam. xxii., where this hymn is also found, though with a number of variations.

The Psalm consists of three principal divisions or strophes, together with an introduction and conclusion :—

I. Introduction, setting forth all that Jehovah is to the Psalmist. Ver. 1—3.

II. Strophe I. The record of David's sufferings and peril, and the mighty deliverance by which he was rescued. Ver. 4—19.

III. Strophe II. The reason for this deliverance as based upon the character of God and the principles of His moral government. Ver. 20—30.

IV. Strophe III. The blessings which he had received in his life ; his own perservation and that of his race (ver. 28) ; help and strength in battle, rule over all enemies. Ver. 31—45.

V. Conclusion, consisting of a joyful thanksgiving and acknowledgement of all God's mercies. Ver. 46—50.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. (A PSALM) OF DAVID, THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH, WHO SPAKE UNTO JEHOVAH THE WORDS OF THIS SONG, IN THE DAY THAT JEHOVAH DELIVERED HIM OUT OF THE HAND OF ALL HIS ENEMIES, AND OUT OF THE HAND OF SAUL: AND HE SAID :]

- I. 1 FERVENTLY do I love Thee, O Jehovah, my strength.  
 2 Jehovah is my stronghold and my fortress and my Deliverer.  
 My God is my rock wherein I find refuge,  
 My shield and horn of my salvation, my high tower.  
 3 I will call upon Jehovah who is worthy to be praised,  
 So shall I be saved from mine enemies.
- II. 4 The bands of death compassed me,  
 And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.

SERVANT OF JEHOVAH. Also in the inser. of Ps. xxxvi., and, in the mouth of God, "my servant," lxxxix. 3, 20, as 2 Sam. iii. 18. vii. 5. David is so called in a special sense as one put in office, and commissioned by God. The same title is applied also to Moses, Joshua, the Prophets, the Angels, &c., as sent by God to do His work. It is strictly an *official* designation, but is never applied by any person to himself. In this it differs from the word "servant" of the New Testament. (Philip. i. 1; Tit. i. 1.)

1—3. Looking back upon his eventful life, a life full of peril and full of mercy, David pours out his heart, first in the expression of strong and tender love to his God; and then in the attempt to set forth in some measure, by employing one figure after another, all that God had been to him during the days of his pilgrimage.

The images, which are most of them of a martial character, are borrowed from the experience of David's life, and the perpetual struggles in which he was engaged. Some of them were

suggested by the natural configuration of Palestine. Amid the "rocks," and "fastnesses" of his native land, and the "high tower" perched on some inaccessible crag, he, with his band of outlaws, had often found a safe hiding-place from the wrath of Saul.

The "shield" and the "horn" seem to stand respectively for all weapons of *defence* and *offence*. The shield, as covering the body; the horn, as a symbol of strength in attack (itself an image, borrowed from animals who push with their horns). Comp. 1 Kings xxii. 11. The image is very common in the Psalter. For a like crowding together of metaphors in addresses to God, see the opening of Pss. xxxi. lxxi.

4. THE BANDS OF DEATH (cf. Acts ii. 24), "the pains or pangs of Death;" a possible meaning, but not so suitable here to the context, where Death is represented, as in the next verse, as a hunter (cf. xci. 3). But in Sam. the word employed means "billows," or lit. "breakers," instead of "bands."

- 5 The bands of hell surrounded me,  
 The snares of death came upon me.  
 6 In my distress I called upon Jehovah,  
 And unto my God did I cry:  
 He heard my voice out of His temple,  
 And my cry before Him came unto His ears.  
 7 Then the earth was moved and did quake,  
 And the foundations of the mountains began to  
 tremble,  
 And were moved to and fro because He was wroth.  
 8 There went up a smoke in His nostrils,  
 And a fire out of His mouth devoured,  
 Coals were kindled by it.

5. HELL, lit. "Sheol," "the unseen world," or here = "the grave."

6. TEMPLE, *i.e.* not the temple, or tabernacle (see v. 7), on Mount Zion, but the temple in heaven, wherein God especially manifests His glory, and where He is worshipped by the heavenly hosts—a place which is both temple and palace. See xi. 4, xxix. 9.

7—19. A grand description of God's appearance in person as Deliverer. He comes to rescue His servant as He came of old to Sinai, and all nature is moved at His coming. Similar descriptions of the Divine manifestation, and of the effects produced by it, occur lxxviii. 7, 8, lxxvii. 14—20, Ex. xix., Judg. v. 4, Am. ix. 5, Micah i. 4, Hab. iii.; but the image is nowhere so fully carried out as here. David's deliverance was, of course, not really accompanied by such convulsions of nature, by earthquake, and fire, and tempest, but his deliverance, or rather his manifold deliverances, gathered into one, as he thinks of them, appear to him as marvellous a proof of the Divine Power, as verily effected by the immediate presence and finger of God, as if He had come down in visible form to accomplish them.

The image is carefully sustained

throughout. First, we have the earthquake, and then, as prelude to the storm, and as herald of God's wrath, the blaze of the lightning (ver. 7, 8). Next, the thick gathering of clouds, which seem to touch and envelope the earth; the wind, and the darkness, which shrouds Jehovah riding on the cherubim (9—11). Lastly, the full outburst of the storm, the clouds parting before the presence and glory of Jehovah, and pouring upon the earth the burden with which they were heavy—the thunder and the lightning and the hail,—the weapons of Jehovah by which, on the one hand, He discomfits His enemies, and, on the other, lays bare the depths of the sea, and the very foundations of the world, that He may save His servant who trusts in Him (12—16).

The image with which the description opened in ver. 4, of a sinking, drowning man, is resumed in ver. 16, and thus completes the whole. In ver. 17—19 the figure is dropped, and the language falls into a lower key.

8. The swift approach of the storm is vividly described. The *smoke* and the *fire* are symbols of the Divine wrath before which all creation must tremble (see ver. 7): here they are

- 9 And He bowed the heavens, and came down,  
And thick darkness was under His feet.
- 10 And He rode upon a cherub and did fly,  
And came flying upon the wings of the wind.
- 11 He made darkness His secret place, His pavilion  
round about Him,  
Dark gloom of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
- 12 At the brightness that was before Him, His thick  
clouds passed,—  
Hail-stones and coals of fire.
- 13 Jehovah also thundered in the heavens,  
And the Highest gave His voice,  
Hail-stones and coals of fire.
- 14 And He sent forth His arrows and scattered them,  
And lightnings innumerable, and discomfited them.
- 15 Then the channels of water were seen,  
And the foundations of the world were discovered,  
At Thy rebuke, O Jehovah,

the clouds and the lightning of the storm, probably as seen about the mountain summits and in the distance.

9. HE BOWED THE HEAVENS, which, with their dark masses of low hanging clouds, seemed almost to touch the earth. Comp. cxliv. 5, and Is. xlv. 8.

10. UPON A CHERUB; or, perhaps, rather a collective noun, and so used for a plural. The cherubim are, as it were, the living chariot of Jehovah, and in their form, being compounded of a man, a bull, a lion, and an eagle (see Ezek. i. and x.), seem to symbolize the powers of nature. As to the etymology of the word "cherub," we are still quite in the dark. It remains what Bähr calls it, a *crux interpretum*. But there can be little doubt that the cherubim—the *living* creatures of Ezekiel—were emphatically the representatives of the life of the creature, and that in its most perfect form. The

four animals of which the cherub is composed belong to the highest class of organized beings, so that the old Jewish proverb says: "Four things are chiefest in the world. The lion among beasts, the bull among cattle, the eagle among birds, and man among all (creatures); but God is the Most High over all." There is evidently a connection between this and the heathen symbols, such, for instance, as they appear on the Assyrian monuments.

12. AT THE BRIGHTNESS, &c., *i.e.* the reflection of His glory, which seems to pierce and part the clouds, which then discharge the hail, the lightning, and the thunder. The repetition of the words, "hail-stones and coals of fire," adds much to the force of the description: "Hail is rare in Palestine, but often the more terrible and destructive when it does fall. Comp. Job xxxviii. 22, Josh. x. 11."—*Ewald*.



- At the blasting of the breath of Thy nostrils.  
 16 He sent from above ; He took me,  
     He drew me out of many waters,  
 17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,  
     And from them that hated me ; for they were too  
     strong for me.  
 18 They came upon me in the day of my calamity,  
     But Jehovah was my stay.  
 19 And He brought me forth into a large place,  
     He delivered me, because He delighted in me.

- III. 20 Jehovah rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
     According to the cleanness of my hands did He  
     recompense me.  
 21 For I have kept the ways of Jehovah,  
     And have not wickedly departed from my God.  
 22 For all His judgements are before me,  
     And His statutes I do not put away from me.  
 23 I have also been perfect with Him,  
     And have kept myself from iniquity.  
 24 Therefore Jehovah recompensed me according to my  
     righteousness ;  
     According to the cleanness of my hands in His eye-  
     sight.

20—30. Next follows the reason for this deliverance—the first hint of which had already been given in the preceding verse in the words, “because He delighted in me.” God deals with men according as He sees their heart to be towards Him. Those who walk before Him in simplicity and uprightness of heart may expect His succour. And David here, as in the last Psalm, asserts not his freedom from sin, but the consciousness of his own integrity. Some, indeed, have seen in the language a too boastful spirit, and therefore would refer this Psalm, as well as the last, to the time before David’s fall. But the general

tenour of the Psalm everywhere breathes a spirit of confidence and trust in God, as far removed as possible from the spirit of self-righteousness. The words are, in truth, words of childlike, open-hearted simplicity, not of arrogant boastfulness. Some allowance, too, must perhaps be made for the fact that under the Old Covenant the knowledge of sin was more superficial than it is under the New. Yet St. Paul does not hesitate to say : “I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day ;” and a man may call himself a miserable sinner, and yet be more of a Pharisee than one who asserts his own righteousness.

- 25 With the good Thou wilt show Thyself good,  
 With the perfect man Thou wilt show Thyself  
 perfect.
- 26 With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure,  
 And with the perverse Thou wilt show Thyself  
 froward.
- 27 For THOU savest the afflicted people,  
 And bringest down high looks.
- 28 For THOU givest light to my lamp,  
 Jehovah my God maketh my darkness to be bright.
- 29 For by Thee I can rush against a troop ;  
 And by my God I can leap over a wall.
- 30 As for God—His way is perfect ;  
 The word of Jehovah is tried ;  
 He is a shield to all who find refuge in Him.

- IV. 31 For who is God but Jehovah,  
 And who is a rock save our God ?
- 32 The God who girdeth me with strength,  
 And maketh my way perfect ;
- 33 Who maketh my feet like hinds' feet,  
 And setteth me on my high places ;
- 34 Who traineth my hands for war,

26. THOU WILT SHOW THYSELF FROWARD. The expression seems rough and harsh, but is no doubt designedly employed in contrast with what goes before. The meaning is—him who is perverse God gives up to follow his own perverse way, till it brings him to destruction. (See lxxxii. 12, and Rom. i. 28). It is also, of course, true, that to the perverse heart God Himself appears perverse. The wicked man thinks that God is "altogether such an one as himself;" but this idea is not so prominent here as the other.

28. MY LAMP. Still more forcibly in 2 Sam. xxii. 29. "Thou, O Jehovah, art my lamp." The lamp lighted in the house is the image at once of *prosperity*

and *continuance* of life and happiness. See cxxxii. 17, and of the house of David, 1 Kings xi. 36, xv. 4 ; 2 Kings viii. 19. So, on the other hand, the extinction of the royal race is compared to the quenching of the lamp, 2 Sam. xxi. 17.

30. TRIED, *i.e.* like metal purified in the fire ; in God's promise there is no admixture of alloy : see xii. 6.

31. The reference is to Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, &c.

33. ON MY HIGH PLACES, *i.e.* the mountain strongholds which I have seized (as in taking the stronghold of Zion itself). On the occupation of these military positions would depend the possession of the whole country.

34. In the preceding verse the

- So that mine arms can bend a bow of brass.
- 35 And Thou hast given me the shield of Thy salvation,  
And Thy right hand hath holden me up,  
And Thy graciousness hath made me great.
- 36 Thou hast made room for my footsteps under me,  
That mine ankles have not slipped.
- 37 I pursued mine enemies and overtook them,  
Neither did I turn again, until they were consumed.
- 38 I have smitten them, that they were not able to rise,  
They are fallen under my feet.
- 39 For Thou hast girded me with strength to the battle ;  
Thou hast bowed down under me those that rose up  
against me.
- 40 Mine enemies also Thou hast made to turn their backs  
before me,  
So that I destroyed them that hate me.
- 41 They cried,—but there was none to save them,—  
Even unto Jehovah, but He answered them not.
- 42 And I beat them small as the dust before the wind,  
Like the mire of the streets I emptied them out.
- 43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the  
people ;  
Thou hast made me Head over the nations :  
A people that I know not, serve me.

comparison with the hind denoted the extraordinary swiftness, which, whether for attack or escape, was considered a great excellence in the warriors of ancient times. Here, the bending of a bow of brass (or bronze, rather, which seems to have been tempered and rendered pliable like steel with us) indicates his great strength (comp. Job xx. 24). In Homer, Ulysses leaves behind him at Ithaca a bow which no one but himself could bend.

35. Yet it is not the bow of brass which has been David's protection, but Jehovah's shield covered him ; Jehovah's right hand held him up ;

Jehovah's wonderful condescension (by which he was taken from the sheep-folds to be king) made him great ; Jehovah made room for him to stand, and subdued those that rose up against him.

THY GRACIOUSNESS. lit. "meekness," "lowliness," a very remarkable word as applied to God, and just one of those links connecting the Divine with the human, which in the Old Testament so strikingly foreshadow an incarnation.

41. The cry extorted in terror, and not coming from an upright heart (ver. 24, &c.), is not heard. See the opposite, ver. 6.

- 44 At the hearing of the ear, they obeyed me,  
The sons of the alien came crouching unto me.  
45 The sons of the alien faded away,  
They came trembling out of their strongholds.

- V. 46. Jehovah liveth, and blessed is my Rock,  
And exalted the God of my salvation ;  
47 Even the God who giveth me vengeance,  
And subdued peoples under me.  
48 Thou art He that deliverest me from mine enemies ;  
Yea, Thou liftest me up above those that rise  
against me ;  
Thou hast delivered me from men of violence.  
49 Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O Jehovah,  
among the nations ;  
And to Thy Name will I sing praises :  
50 Who giveth great deliverance to His King ;  
And showeth loving-kindness to His Anointed,  
To David and his seed for evermore.

44. AT THE HEARING OF THE EAR, *i.e.* even at a distance, without seeing me, as soon as they heard my command. (See Job xlii. 5.)

CAME CROUCHING, *lit.* "lied unto me," so descriptive of the *abject*, *crouching*, *fawning* submission of the Oriental. Cf. lxvi. 3 (where see note), lxxxi. 15, "feigned submission."

45. FADED AWAY, *i.e.* before the victorious might of David, like plants scorched and shrivelled before the hot blast of the simoom (Is. xl. 7).

CAME TREMBLING (*lit.* trembled out of, &c.), *i.e.* in order to give in their submission and to implore the clemency and protection of the conqueror (Micah vii 17).

46—50. The hymn now concludes with the praise of Jehovah, who had done so great things for David and for

his seed. And as Jehovah has not only placed him on the throne of Jerusalem, but has given him dominion over foreign nations, he will proclaim amongst these also the Name and the praises of his God. Here we have the first utterance of a hope, which in later times became clear and distinct, that the heathen should learn to fear and worship Jehovah.

49. St. Paul quotes this verse Rom. xv. 9, as well as Deut. xxxii. 43 and Ps. cxvii. 1, as proof that the salvation of Christ belonged, in the purpose of God, to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The Psalm therefore looks beyond David. David and David's rule over the nations are but a type and image of Christ, and of that spiritual kingdom which He came to establish.

## PSALM XIX.

THIS Psalm consists of two distinct parts, in which are contrasted God's Revelation of Himself in Nature, and His Revelation of Himself in His Word. It speaks first of His glory as seen in the Heavens, and then of His glory as manifested in His Law.

It may have been written perhaps in the first flush of an Eastern sunrise, when the sun was seen "going forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a mighty man to run his course." The song breathes all the life and freshness, all the gladness and glory of the morning.

This is one of the Psalms appointed by the Church to be read in her service on the Festival of the Nativity. But the selection surely does not rest on any of those merely external and superficial points of connection which are commonly supposed to have guided it. Thus, for instance, it has been said that the Psalm speaks of the glory of the natural sun as seen in the heavens, and the Church celebrates on that day the rising of "the Sun of righteousness" upon the earth. Or again, St. Paul illustrates the diffusion of the Gospel throughout the world by words borrowed from the Psalm (Rom. x. 18), and hence it may be naturally associated with the Incarnation which led to that diffusion. But it is obvious that, if this quotation influenced the selection, the Psalm would far more appropriately have been appointed for Ascension Day or Whitsunday.\*

No, it is with a far profounder wisdom that the Church puts this Psalm into our lips on Christmas Day. What is the great truth which the Church brings before us so prominently on that day? Not only the Incarnation, but the truth that in the Incarnate Jesus we have the perfect Revelation of God. It is the Word who was with God and was God, who being in the bosom of the Father declared the Father, who as on that day became flesh. And what does the Psalm speak of, but two other imperfect and partial and preparatory Revelations of God, His Revelation in Nature and His Revelation in His written

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\* "In the Latin Church this Psalm is appointed for use also on the festivals of the Ascension and of Trinity Sunday; so likewise it was in the Sarum Use; and in the Gregorian Use it is appointed for the Annunciation."—*Wordsworth*.

word? Thus we are led step by step from the first and lowest Revelation in the natural world, to the Revelation in the written word, and then beyond and above these to the one great, perfect, all-embracing, all-completing Revelation in His Son. The Gospel and Epistle for the Day give the true explanation of the choice of this Psalm. It begins, and they finish, the cycle of Divine Revelation to man.

The strophical arrangement of the Psalm is as follows :—

I. The Glory of God in Creation. Ver. 1—6.

(1) The witness of the heavens to God as their Creator (ver. 1).

(2) The nature of the witness as continuous (ver. 2), though not audible (ver. 3); and universal (ver. 4 *a, b*).

(3) The witness especially of the sun, who, as the most glorious of the heavenly bodies, is chiefest herald of God's praise (ver. 4 *c*—6).

II. The Glory of God in His Word. Ver. 7—14.

(1) The excellence and power (ver. 7—9), and the exceeding preciousness (ver. 10, 11), of the Law of Jehovah.

(2) The prayer of the servant of Jehovah in the light of that Law, to be kept from unconscious errors, as well as from open transgressions (ver. 12, 13), from sins of the lip and sins of the heart (ver. 14).

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. (A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

I. 1 THE heavens are telling the glory of God;  
And the work of His hands doth the firmament  
declare.

1. The Psalm opens with the impression produced on the Poet's mind by the magnificence and the order of Creation. Of the two clauses of this verse, the first states the *fact* that the heavens publish God's glory; the second explains *how* this is done, viz. by testifying that He has made them. Comp. viii. 1, Rom. i. 20, Acts xiv. 17. This is the true meaning of the heavens and their pomp. That splendour which fills their arch, that beauty which so attracts the eye, that ever-

lasting order by which Day and Night follow in sweet vicissitude — these things are not the offspring of Chance; they are not the evolution of some blind spirit enchained within the mass which it vivifies; much less are they the work of some evil power whose kingdom and whose triumph are to be seen in the material universe. *God* created them, and they show forth *His* glory. *His* fingers fashioned them. He clothed them with light as with a garment, and put the sun in the

- 2 Day unto day poureth forth speech .  
 And night unto night revealeth knowledge.  
 3 There is no speech, and there are no words,  
 Their voice is not heard :  
 4 Through the whole earth hath their line gone forth,  
 And their words unto the ends of the world.  
 For the sun hath He set a tabernacle in them ;  
 5 And he is like a bridegroom that goeth forth out  
 of his chamber ;  
 He rejoiceth as a mighty man to run his course.  
 6 From (one) end of the heaven is his going forth,  
 And his circuit as far as the (other) ends thereof,  
 Neither is anything hid from his heat.

II. 7 The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul ;  
 The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise  
 the simple.

midst of them to show forth His praise.

2. This verse expresses not so much the progressive character, as the never-failing continuance of the testimony. There is no pause, no change in the stately procession ; none of them thrusts or breaks his ranks ; for ever they abide the same.

3. THEIR VOICE IS NOT HEARD, lit. "is inaudible." This seems to be a kind of correction or explanation of the bold figure which had ascribed language to the heavens. The sense is very well expressed in the well-known paraphrase of Addison :—

"What though *in solemn silence* all  
 Moveround this dark terrestrial ball.

\* \* \* \*

In *reason's ear* they all rejoice,  
 And utter forth a glorious voice,"  
 &c.

4. St. Paul, Rom. x. 18, quotes the former part of this verse in illustration of the progress of the Gospel. "Faith," he says, "cometh by hearing," and

then asks, "Have they (*i.e.* the nations at large) not heard?" Yea, rather, so widely has the Gospel been preached, that its progress may be described in the words in which the Psalmist tells of God's Revelation of Himself in Nature.

IN THEM, *i.e.* in the heavens, hath God set a tent or pavilion, &c. In like manner a tabernacle or pavilion is ascribed to the sun, Hab. iii. 11.

7. But the singer turns from God's Revelation of Himself in Nature, to His Revelation of Himself in His written word. He turns from that which was the common property of all, to that which was the special privilege of the Jew. In accordance with this change of subject is the difference in the use of the Divine Names. The transition to this new subject is no doubt somewhat abrupt, but this only renders the contrast the more forcibly striking. There is a quick rebound of the heart as it were from the world of Nature, beautiful and glorious as it is, to that

8 The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart ;  
The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening  
the eyes.

which is far more beautiful and more glorious, the word of Revelation. But despite the seeming abruptness, there is a point of connexion between the two portions of the Psalm. What the Sun is in the natural world, that the Law is in the spiritual : the one quickens and cherishes all animal life—nothing being hid from his heat ; the other quickens and cherishes the life of the soul.

7—10. It would be difficult to find a more perfect example of Hebrew parallelism. In ver. 7, 8, we have in each member of each verse the Law of Jehovah described, first, by means of a simple attribute setting forth its inherent character ; and then subjoined, without a copula, what it is in its effects upon the heart and spirit of men. The second division, too, of each member is constructed in both verses exactly on the same principle. Thus to “perfect” in one clause, answers “sure” in the next : to “restoring the soul,” “making wise the simple,” and so on. In ver. 9 the parallelism is no less strictly observed, but it is thrown into a different form, the latter half of each member being now a further predicate of the *nature* of the Law considered in *itself*, not in its *effects*. In ver. 10 we have not the effects of the Law, as before, but its preciousness and sweetness set forth ; and here again there is the most exact parallelism between the two members of the verse.

7. THE LAW . . . THE TESTIMONY. These are the collective terms embracing the whole body of “statutes,” “judgements,” &c. afterwards mentioned. This revelation has the name of “testimony,” as testifying, bearing witness of, God’s character

both in His good will towards those who obey Him, and in His displeasure against transgressors, especially in the latter sense. It is, as Harless says, “the word of God, testifying of Himself, and affirming what He is, in opposition to the apostasy of man.” See Deut. xxxi. 26, 27. Hence the force of its connexion with the ark and the mercy-seat, Exod. xxv. 16, xxvi. 34, Lev. xvi. 13 ; the symbol of God’s righteous severity against sin being hidden beneath the symbol of His grace and mercy.

Next we have its marvellous effects declared.

RESTORING THE SOUL, *i.e.* it calls it back from its wanderings by reminding it of its ingratitude, by setting before it its high destiny, by bringing it to its true Shepherd and Guardian.

MAKING WISE THE SIMPLE. It gives to each one who studies it with *open*, unprejudiced, candid mind, that divine wisdom whereby he attains to salvation. Comp. 2 Tim. iii. 15, “the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.” The purposes for which scripture is there said to be profitable should be compared with what is said here.

THE SIMPLE, lit. “the open,” not here, “the foolish,” as often in Proverbs, but he who is ready to become a fool that he may be wise, who has the true child-like spirit (Matt. xi. 25, 1 Cor. i. 27).

8. RIGHT, *i.e.* straight, as opposed to the crooked ways of men.

ENLIGHTENING THE EYES. According to the expressive Hebrew idiom, it is to the soul what food is to the worn and fainting body. It is what the honey which he found in the wood was to Jonathan, when he



- 9 The fear of Jehovah is clean, standing fast for ever ;  
The judgements of Jehovah are truth, they are  
righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much  
fine gold ;  
Sweeter also than honey and the dropping of the  
honeycomb.
- 11 Moreover Thy servant is enlightened by them,  
In keeping of them there is great reward.
- 12 As for errors,—who can discern (them) ?  
From secret (faults) do Thou pronounce me innocent.
- 13 Also from presumptuous (sins) keep Thy servant back .  
Let them not have dominion over me :  
Then shall I be perfect,  
And innocent from great transgression.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of  
my heart be acceptable before Thee,

returned wearied and exhausted from the pursuit of his enemies. Cf. cxix. 18, Acts xxvi. 18, Eph. i. 18.

9. THE FEAR OF JEHOVAH. Another name for the Law, but as contemplated not so much in its outward aspect, as in its working on the heart.

11. Personal experience of the blessedness of obeying God's Law, inasmuch as it brings with it both *enlightenment* and *reward*.

12. But with all this affection for God's word, there is mingled awe and reverence. That word lays a man bare to himself. It judges him : it shows him what is in him, convinces him how much there is that needs to be purged, how far even one who loves it is from a perfect obedience. It is at once a copy of the will of God, and a mirror of the heart of man. Hence it calls forth the penitent confession, "As for errors, who can understand them?" and the prayer both to be

absolved—"pronounce me free"—and to be kept from sin ; first for pardon, and then for sanctification.

ERRORS, only here sins both of ignorance and infirmity, those which are done unintentionally and unconsciously.

SECRET (FAULTS), lit. things hidden, *i.e.* not only from others, but from our own hearts, through inobservance, through a too ready forgetfulness of them when observed, through the habit of self-deception, or even through their being wilfully cherished.

13. PRESUMPTUOUS (SINS). These are sins done with a high hand ; see Num. xv. 27—31. Against these he prays that they may not get the full mastery over him. This completes the climax, which begins with involuntary, and advances in hidden, presumptuous, and at length ruling sins which leave a man their hopeless slave.

14. BE ACCEPTABLE, the usual

## O Jehovah, my Rock and my Redeemer !

formula applied to God's acceptance of sacrifices offered to Him (Lev. i. 3, 4, &c.). Prayer to God is the sacrifice of the heart and of the lips. Comp. Hos. xiv. 2, "So will we offer our lips as calves."

The name Jehovah is repeated for

the seventh time. The epithets "my Rock," "my Redeemer," have here a peculiar force. For He is my strength in keeping the Law ; my Redeemer is delivering me from the guilt and the power of sin.

## PSALM XX.

THIS is evidently a liturgical Psalm, and was intended originally, it would seem, to be sung on behalf of a king who was about to go forth to war against his enemies. The structure of the Psalm, and the change from the plural to the singular, render it probable that it was chanted in alternate measure by the congregation and the Priest or Levite who led the choir. As the king stands within the sanctuary offering his sacrifice, the whole assembled crowd of worshipers in the spacious courts lift up their voices in the prayer, that Jehovah would graciously accept those sacrifices, and send him help and victory in the battle.

For what special occasion the Psalm was first composed, it is of course now quite impossible to say. Some, following the Syriac translator, would refer it to the time of David's war with the Syrians and Ammonites (2 Sam. x.); but obviously it would apply to other circumstances equally well.

The Psalm has no doubt a prophetic aspect, from the fact that the Jewish king was, by virtue of his office, a type of Christ. Luther, indeed, observes : "This Psalm almost all expound of Christ. But such an exposition appears to me to be too far-fetched to be called literal. Accordingly, in its more simple and evident meaning, I think it to be a kind of general litany for magistrates and those who are placed in high office, for whom the Apostle also (1 Tim. ii. 2) bids us first of all pray, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life."

The Psalm consists of three parts :—

I. The prayer of the congregation. This was probably chanted by the Levites, whilst the smoke of the sacrifices ascended towards heaven. Ver. 1—5.

II. Either the king himself, strengthened and encouraged by the prayer of the congregation, or more probably one of the Levites, now takes up the strain, gives utterance to his faith in God, and already in spirit sees his enemies, great and powerful as they were, broken and overthrown. Ver. 6—8.

III. The congregation once more respond, and taking up the words of the king or the Levite (ver. 6), change them into a prayer for the king, adding also a petition that their prayer may be heard. Ver. 9.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

*The congregation led by the Levites.*

- 1 JEHOVAH answer thee in the day of distress,  
The Name of the God of Jacob defend thee.
- 2 Send thee help from the sanctuary,  
And uphold thee out of Zion !
- 3 Remember all thine offerings ;  
And graciously accept thy burnt sacrifice. [Selah.]
- 4 Give thee according to thy heart's desire,  
And fulfil all thy counsel !
- 5 So will we shout for joy because of thy salvation,  
And in the Name of our God will we wave our banners.  
Jehovah fulfil all thy petitions.

Ver. 1—4. The futures are all optative, the prayers and wishes of the people accompanying the offering of the sacrifice.

1. DEFEND THEE, lit. "set thee up on high," *i.e.* as in a fortress where no enemy can do thee harm, or on a rock at the foot of which the waves fret and dash themselves in impotent fury.

3. The king offers, as was usual, before going into battle (1 Sam. xiii. 9, &c.), his whole burnt-sacrifices, together with the bloodless offering of fine flour, mixed with oil and frank-

incense. To this last the verb "*remember*" is peculiarly applicable. For the priest was to take a handful of it, and burn it as a "*memorial*" (cf. Acts x. 4) upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord, Lev. ii. 2.

GRACIOUSLY ACCEPT, lit. "make fat," but here in a declarative sense, "regard as fat," and so "receive as fat," *i.e.* as worthy to be offered, the fattest of the flock being chosen for sacrifice.

4. THY PETITIONS, *i.e.* all thy plans and measures in the war.

*The King or a Levite.*

- 6 Now know I that Jehovah saveth His Anointed ;  
 He will answer him from His holy heaven  
 With the strength of the salvation of His right hand.  
 7 Some of chariots and some of horses,  
 But *we* will make mention of the Name of Jehovah  
 our God.  
 8 *They* have bowed down and fallen,  
 But *we* have risen and stood upright.

*The people and Levites.*

- 9 O Jehovah, save the king !  
 May He answer us when we cry (unto Him) !

6. The second division of the Psalm. The offering of the sacrifices had, we may suppose, been concluded ; and now, after a pause of some duration, a single voice (probably of one of the Levites) is heard, declaring that the sacrifice has been graciously received, and thence drawing an augury of success.

The prayer had been (ver. 1, 2) that God would hear and send help from the *earthly* sanctuary or Zion. Now the answer is said to come from His holy *heaven*.

7. According to the Law, Israel was forbidden to maintain a standing

army. See the directions concerning the king, Deut. xvii. 16.

With the sentiment here expressed, comp. David's words to Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 45, and Ps. xxxiii. 16, &c. Similar language is common in the Prophets. The basis of it all is to be found in the Law, Deut. xx. 2—4, xxxii. 30.

9. After the solo, the Chorus again take up the strain.

O JEHOVAH, SAVE THE KING, &c. Such is the rendering of the LXX., which is also followed by the Vulg., *Domine saluum fac regem*, whence our "God save the King."

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## PSALM XXI.

THE last Psalm was a litany before the king went forth to battle. This is apparently a Te Deum on his return. In that the people cried, "Jehovah give thee according to thy heart's desire:" in this they thank God who has heard their prayer, "The wish of his heart hast Thou granted him."

The Psalm was evidently sung in the Temple, either by the whole congregation, or by a choir of Levites. Like the last, it is Messianic, and in the same sense. Each Jewish monarch was but a feeble type of Israel's true King: and all the hopes and aspirations of pious hearts, however they might have for their *immediate* object the then reigning monarch, whether David himself or one of David's children, still looked beyond these to Him who should be David's Lord as well as his Son.

It falls into two strophes :—

I. A Prayer to Jehovah on behalf of the king. Here we have the gladness of the king ascribed (1) to what Jehovah has done, is doing, and will do in his behalf; and (2) to the fact that the king *trusteth* in Jehovah. Ver. 1—7.

II. Good wishes and words of happy augury addressed to the king himself, who is assured of victory over all his enemies. Ver. 8—12.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 JEHOVAH, in Thy strength shall the king be glad,  
And in Thy salvation how greatly shall he exult !
- 2 The wish of his heart hast Thou granted him ;  
And the desire of his lips hast Thou not refused.  
[Selah.]
- 3 For Thou comest to meet him with blessings of prosperity,  
Thou puttest a crown of fine gold upon his head.
- 4 He asked life of Thee :—Thou gavest (it) him,  
Length of days, for ever and ever.

1, 2. Introduction. Jehovah has answered the prayer of the king, and so filled him with joy.

1. STRENGTH . . . SALVATION (or, SAVING HELP), words used especially of strength and succour vouchsafed in battle.

Ver. 3—6. The manner in which the king's prayer has been answered.

3. BLESSINGS OF PROSPERITY, *i.e.* blessings which bring and consist in prosperity; cf. Prov. xxiv. 25.

A CROWN OF FINE GOLD. Some see a reference either to David's first coronation, or to his taking the crown of the king of Rabbah, 2 Sam. xii. 30. But "Thou puttest a crown of fine gold upon his head" may only mean, "Thou givest him kingly dignity and presence."

4. FOR EVER AND EVER. There is no difficulty in this expression even as applied to David. It was usual to pray that the king might live for ever

- 5 Great is his glory through Thy salvation ;  
 Honour and majesty dost Thou lay upon him.  
 6, For Thou makest him (full of) blessings for ever ;  
 Thou dost gladden him with joy in Thy presence.  
 7 For the king trusteth in Jehovah,  
 And through the mercy of the Most High he shall  
 not be moved.

(To the Kings.)

- 8 Thy hand shall find all thine enemies,  
 Thy right hand shall find out them that hate thee.  
 9 Thou shalt make them as a furnace of fire in the time  
 of thy wrathfulness :  
 Jehovah in His anger shall consume them ; and a fire  
 shall devour them.  
 10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth,  
 And their seed from among the children of men.  
 11 For they intended evil against thee ;  
 They imagined a mischievous device—which they  
 cannot perform.  
 12 For thou shalt make them turn their back :  
 On thy strings thou shalt make ready (thine arrows)  
 against the face of them.

(1 Kings i. 31, Neh. ii. 3, &c.), and a like anticipation of an endless life occurs in other Psalms (xxxiii. 6, lxi. 6, xci. 16). But it applies most truly to Christ.

5. SALVATION, see on ver. I.

6. Lit. "*Thou makest him blessings*," i.e. blessed himself and the bearer of blessing to others. Comp. Gen. xii. 2, Is. xix. 24, Ezek. xxxiv. 26. For the expression, JOY IN THY PRESENCE, comp. xvi. 11.

9. THOU SHALT MAKE THEM AS A FURNACE OF FIRE. This is capable of two interpretations : (1) it may be equivalent to "as if they were in a

furnace," or by a metonymy the furnace may be put for the fuel which it consumes (as lxxxiii. 14, "Thou wilt make them . . . as the fire which consumeth the wood," instead of "as the wood which the fire consumes ;" see also Zech. xii. 6). (2) The king himself may be compared to a furnace, "Thou shalt do with them, as a furnace would, viz. consume them." There is a similar ambiguity in the reference of the image in xxxix. 11.

10. THEIR FRUIT = children, posterity, &c, Lam. ii. 20, Hosea ix. 16 ; more fully "fruit of the womb," cxxvii. 3, cxxxii. 11

13 Be Thou exalted, Jehovah, in Thy strength ;  
So will we hymn and praise Thy might.

13. The singer has done with his good wishes and prophecies for the king. Now he turns to the Giver of victory, and prays Him to manifest

Himself in all his power and glory, that His people may ever acknowledge Him as the only source of their strength.

## PSALM XXII.

ACCORDING to the Inscription, this is one of David's Psalms. We know, however, of no circumstances in his life to which it can possibly be referred. In none of his persecutions by Saul was he ever reduced to such straits as those here described. And yet there is a distinctness in the enumeration of circumstances, as in ver. 18, 19, which connects the Psalm evidently with some particular occasion.

It is more probable that the Psalm was composed by one of the exiles during the Babylonish captivity. And though the feelings and expressions are clearly individual, not national, yet they are the feelings and expressions of one who suffers not merely as an individual, but so to speak in a representative character.

Hence we may regard him in his sufferings as a type of Christ ; and surely it was most fitting that at the very time when the nation itself was shown how, through its own sufferings in exile, the heathen were to be claimed for Jehovah, it should also learn by means of this typical instance, how, through the sufferings of the Great Deliverer, all its hopes would be fulfilled. Thus the history of Israel was fashioned to be typical of the history of Redemption, as well as that of the individual Israelite to be typical of Christ.

The references in the New Testament to this Psalm, as fulfilled in Christ, are many. The first words of it were uttered by Jesus on the cross, Matt. xxvii. 46. The scorn of the passers-by, and the shaking of the head, in ver. 7, have their counterpart in the story of the crucifixion, Matt. xxvii. 39. The words of ver. 8 are found in Matt.

xxvii. 43; the intense thirst, "my tongue cleaveth to my jaws," of ver. 15, in John xix. 28; the parting of the garments, &c. ver. 18, in John xix. 23; the piercing (if that is a correct rendering; see note on the ver.) of the hands and feet in ver. 16, in the nailing to the cross. Similarly we are justified in interpreting the latter part of the Psalm of the fruit of Christ's Passion and Resurrection by the way in which ver. 22 is quoted, Heb. ii. 12, &c.

The Psalm consists of two parts:—

- I. Complaint and Prayer. Ver. 1—21.
- II. Vows and Hopes. Ver. 22—31.

Each of these principal divisions admits of its subdivision. For we have—

I. First, the pouring out of the heart's sorrow, with one of the tenderest appeals to God's compassionate Love that ever trembled on human lips (ver. 2—11); and next, the earnest entreaty for help, because of the greatness and nearness of the peril (ver. 12—22). The peril so near, and God so far off—this is the thought which colours all, both complaint and prayer.

II. In the second part, again, we have, first, the vows of thanksgiving for deliverance, and the praising of God's Name in the "midst of the congregation" (ver. 23—27). Next, the confident hope that God's kingdom shall be set up in all the earth, and that all, great and low, shall submit themselves to Him (ver. 28—32).

According to a different and more general arrangement, the Psalm consists of three parts:—

- I. Complaint. Ver. 1—10.
- II. Prayer. Ver. 11—21.
- III. Expression of Hope. Ver. 22—31.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. TO THE MELODY "THE HIND OF THE DAWN."\* A PSALM OF DAVID.]

I. 1 MY God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

1. WHY? What these words were in the lips of the Holy One of God, heart of man may not conceive. For a moment in that last agony the Perfect Man was *alone*, alone with the sin of the world. But it is going beyond Scrip-

\* Various explanations have been given of this title, but the most natural seems to be that "the hind of the dawn" are the first words of some other song, to the music of which this was to be sung.



(Why art Thou) far from helping me, (and from) the words of my roaring?

2 O my God, I cry in the day-time, but Thou answerest not,

And in the night season, and keep not silence :

3 And Thou art Holy, throned above the praises of Israel.

4 In Thee our fathers trusted ;

They trusted, and Thou didst rescue them :

5 Unto Thee did they cry and were delivered,

In Thee they trusted and were not ashamed.

6 But as for me—I am a worm, not a man,

A reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7 All they that see me, laugh me to scorn,

They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, (saying,)

8 “Cast (thyself) upon Jehovah—let Him rescue him,

Let Him deliver him, seeing He delighteth in him.”

9 For Thou art He that took me out of the womb,

ture to say that a sense of God's wrath extorted that cry. For to the last breath He was the well-beloved of the Father, and the repeated “My God,” “My God,” is a witness even then to His confidence in the Father's Love.

2. Again “my God.” And this verse further explains the “why” of the first verse. It is as if he said “I cannot understand this darkness. It is not that I have forgotten Thee. Day and night I cry—to me there is no silence.”

3. And there is another reason, THOU ART HOLY : God's holiness is but another aspect of His faithfulness and mercy.

THRONED ABOVE THE PRAISES, &c., or *inhabiting the praises*, apparently with allusion to the phrase “dwelling between the cherubim,” 1 Sam. iv. 4 ; 2 Sam. vi. 2 ; cf. lxxx. 1, xcix. 1.

THE PRAISES (plur.) with reference to the many acts of deliverance and

redemption which had from time to time called forth a thankful remembrance. There is perhaps an allusion to Exod. xv. 11, 12.

4, 5. Thrice “they trusted,” and only once “they cried.”

6. Every word of this verse finds its echo in Isaiah. There Israel is “a worm,” xli. 14. And there “the servant of Jehovah” is one whose “visage is so marred that he is not like a man,” lii. 14. See, also, Is. xlix. 7, l. 6, and liii. 3, for similar forms of expression.

7. St. Luke, in his account of our Lord's crucifixion (xxiii. 35), has used the verb employed by the LXX. in this passage.

SHOOT OUT THE LIP. Cf. xxxv. 21, Job xvi. 10.

SHAKE THE HEAD—clearly not as an expression of compassion, but of malicious joy. Cf. cix. 25, xlv. 14, lxiv. 8, where see Note. See also Matt. xxvii. 39.

Thou didst make me trust, (when I was) on my  
mother's breasts.

10 On Thee was I cast from the womb,  
From my mother's belly THOU art my God.

II. 11 Be not far from me ; for trouble is hard at hand,  
For there is none to help me.

12 Many bulls have come about me ;  
Bashan's strong ones have beset me round.

13 They have gaped upon me with their mouth,  
(As) a ravening and a roaring lion.

14 Like water am I poured out,  
And all my bones are out of joint ;  
My heart has become like wax,  
It melteth in the midst of my body.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd,  
And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws ;  
And Thou wilt lay me in the dust of death.

16 For dogs have come about me,  
The assembly of evil-doers have enclosed me,  
Piercing my hands and my feet.

17 I can tell all my bones :  
They stare, they look upon me.

11. Be not *far* (with reference to ver. 1), for trouble is *near*.

12. BASHAN'S STRONG ONES. The land of Bashan was celebrated for its fat pastures (cf. Deut. xxxii. 14, and Amos iv. 1; Ezek. xxxix. 18), extending from Jabbok to Mount Hermon, and eastward to the extreme boundary of Palestine.

14. MY BONES ARE OUT OF JOINT. Lit. "have separated themselves," as of a man stretched upon the rack.

We are reminded of Peter's words, "Him, being delivered according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain : " Acts ii. 23.

16. FOR DOGS HAVE COME ABOUT

ME. The enemies are still compared to savage animals, but the figure is somewhat different : "dogs" not only as fierce, but as unclean. Almost the only trait of bitterness in the P-salm. We must remember that these dogs are the savage wild dogs of the East, 1 Kings xiv. 11 ; Ps. lix. 6, 14, 15.

PIERCING MY HANDS AND MY FEET. The present Hebrew text, if adhered to, would require the rendering, "Like a lion, (coming about) my hands and my feet." But the sense is poor, and the weight of critical authority is against it.

17. I CAN TELL. Before : "all my bones are out of joint." Hence it would seem that the body was racked by some violent torture ; not merely

- 18 They part my garments among them,  
 And upon my vesture do they cast lots.  
 19 But Thou, O Jehovah, be not far (from me);  
 O my Strength, haste Thee to help me.  
 20 Deliver my soul from the sword,  
 My only one from the power of the dog.  
 21 Save me from the lion's mouth,  
 And from the horns of the wild oxen—Thou hast  
 answered me.

- III. 22 So will I tell Thy name to my brethren,  
 In the midst of the congregation will I praise  
 Thee : (saying,)  
 23 "Ye that fear Jehovah, praise Him ;  
 All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify Him ;  
 And stand in awe of Him, all ye the seed of Israel !  
 24 For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction  
 of the afflicted,  
 Neither hath He hid His face from him ;  
 And when he cried unto Him, He heard."

emaciated by starvation and suffering. And thus in his utter misery he is a gazing-stock to them that hate him : "they look upon me," *i.e.* with malicious satisfaction at my sufferings.

18. And now follows the last act of indignity, perpetrated as it were in sight of his death : his very clothes are stript from him, and are shared as plunder among his foes. This passage clearly cannot apply to David. But some Jew in exile may have really suffered such things, and so have pre-figured in history the sufferings of Christ. All this was fulfilled to the letter in Christ. See John xix. 23, &c.

20. MY ONLY ONE, or, as English Version, *my darling*. From the parallelism = *my soul, my life*. In similar connexion, xxxv. 17. It occurs besides, Judges xi. 34, of Jephthah's daughter (see Gen. xxii. 2, Prov. iv. 3).

*The life* is so called either because man has but *one* life, or because it is the most precious of all things.

FROM THE POWER (Heb. hand) of the dog. Similarly "from the hand of the lion and the bear," 1 Sam. xvii. 37 ; "from the hand of the flame," Is. xlvii. 14.

21. WILD OXEN. "From the horns of the wild oxen (still found in herds on the east of Jordan)—Thou hast heard and delivered me" (opp. to ver. 3, "Thou hearest not"). Before it had been "Thou answerest not,"—now at the most critical moment Faith asserts her victory, "Thou hast answered." See the same sudden transition, the same quick assurance that prayer has been heard, vi. 9, xx. 6, xxviii. 6, xxxi. 22. The vows and thanksgivings which follow are a consequence of this assurance.

- 25 Of Thee is my praise in the great congregation ;  
 My vows will I pay before them that fear Him.
- 26 The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied,  
 They shall praise Jehovah that seek Him :  
 May your heart live for ever !
- 27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto  
 Jehovah,  
 And all the families of the nations shall worship before  
 Thee.
- 28 For Jehovah's is the kingdom ;  
 And He ruleth among the nations.
- 29 All the fat ones of the earth have eaten and worshipt,  
 Before Him shall all they that go down into the dust  
 bend the knee,  
 And whosoever cannot keep his soul alive.
- 30 A seed shall serve Him ;  
 It shall be told to the generation (to come) concerning  
 the Lord.
- 31 They shall come, they shall declare his righteousness

25. MY VOWS, thank-offerings vowed in his trouble. The flesh of the sacrifice in such cases was to be eaten (Lev. vii. 16): hence the account of the banquet which follows, "they shall eat and be satisfied."

26. MAY YOUR HEART LIVE (*i.e.* be full of all joy and blessedness). This would have sounded more natural to our ears if it had been, "Their heart shall live for ever." This abrupt transition, however, from narration in the third person to address in the second, is not unusual in Hebrew. See the next verse, and Zech. xiv. 5, "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with *Thee*," instead of "with *Him*."

29. The poet again returns to the figure of the banquet, and uses here the past tenses instead of the future, as is very usual with the Prophets, because in vision he already beheld his

hopes fulfilled. Hence he speaks of what *is to be* as if it already *were*. All "the fat ones of the earth" (the rich and mighty) as well as the poor, "who cannot keep his soul alive," *i.e.* who is so poor that he has not the bare means of subsistence, shall sit down together at that banquet in the kingdom of heaven. (The same banquet which is spoken of Is. xxv. 6.)

THEY THAT GO DOWN INTO THE DUST. Here not literally "the dead," as in the expression "they that go down into the pit," &c., but rather they who are "*ready* to go down," whose misery is so great that they are at the point to die.

31. THEY, *i.e.* this new generation, this church which the Lord has planted.

HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, not only as manifested in the deliverance of His righteous servant, but as manifested

To a people that shall be born, that He hath done (it).

in all His great work of salvation, both in the suffering and in the exaltation of Christ, and also in providing the feast for all who will partake thereof.

First he will praise God in the congregation of Israel, and make known His name to his brethren. Then, all nations shall come and sit down at the banquet of fat things, and worship before the Lord. Lastly, to future ages also shall God's righteousness be declared. This hope of the conversion of other nations to the faith of God's elect, was in an especial manner characteristic of the period of the return from the Babylonish captivity. The prophecies of Zechariah are full of it; and so are many of the Psalms

which probably date from that period.

It is impossible not to feel how far such hopes must have extended beyond the personal fortunes of the singer, or any results that he could possibly have anticipated from his own sufferings. If even in those sufferings he was but a feeble type of the Great Sufferer who should give His life for the world, certainly in the thanksgiving for his deliverance, and the results of that deliverance, there must have been but a very faint foreshadowing of the joy set before Him who endured the Cross, and who saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied.

## PSALM XXIII.

IT is unnecessary to refer this Psalm to any particular period of David's history. As the outpouring of a heart which has found perfect rest in God, it was most probably written in advanced years, after a long experience of God's goodness. Its language is coloured by the reminiscences of his past life. His own shepherd experience no doubt suggested the image of the former part: and in the latter we may perhaps trace a recollection, more or less distinct, of the circumstances mentioned 2 Sam. xvii. 27—29, when, on David's coming to Mahanaim, during Absalom's rebellion, he and his party were succoured and refreshed in their faintness and weariness, through the kindness of Barzillai and other friends who supplied their wants.

[A PSALM OF DAVID.]

I JEHOVAH is my shepherd, I shall not want.

1. MY SHEPHERD. The image, is first employed by Jacob, Gen. xlviii. natural amongst a nation of shepherds, 15, "The God which fed me," lit.

- 2 In grassy pastures He maketh me to lie down ;  
Beside waters of rest doth He guide me.
- 3 He restoreth my soul ;  
He leadeth me in paths of righteousness,  
For His Name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of  
death,  
I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me :

"my Shepherd ;" xlix. 24. There, as here, God is the Shepherd of the *individual*, cf. Ps. cxix. 176, still more frequently of His *people*; lxxviii. 52, lxxx. 1; Micah vii. 14; Is. lxiii. 11, and especially Ezek. xxxiv. : most beautifully and touchingly in Is. xl. 11. So in the New Testament of Christ, John x. 1—16, xxi. 15—17; Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 25, v. 4.

On our Lord's appropriation of the figure to Himself, F. W. Robertson says with much force and beauty : "'I am the Good Shepherd.' In the dry and merciless logic of a commentary, trying laboriously to find out minute points of ingenious resemblance in which Christ is like a shepherd, the glory and the tenderness of this sentence are dried up. But try to feel, by imagining what the lonely Syrian shepherd must feel towards the helpless things which are the companions of his daily life, for whose safety he stands in jeopardy every hour, and whose value is measurable to him, not by price, but by his own jeopardy, and then we have reached some notion of the love which Jesus meant to represent, that Eternal Tenderness which bends over us—ininitely lower though we be in nature—and knows the name of each and the trials of each, and thinks for each with a separate solicitude, and gave Himself for each with a Sacrifice as special, and a Love as personal, as if in the whole world's wilderness were none other but that one." (*Sermons*, 2d Series, pp. 286, &c.)

I SHALL NOT WANT, or, perhaps, "I cannot want," as describing not only the present experience, but as expressing confidence for all time to come. Observe the absolute, *I shall not want*, stronger than in xxxiv. 10, or Deut. ii. 6, or viii. 9. These words are the key-note of the Psalm. David speaks them out of the fulness of his own experience. As he had watched over, and provided for, and tended his flock, leading them to the greenest pastures, and finding for them the water which in that country was so scarce, and guarding them by night from beasts of prey, so he felt his God would provide for and watch over him,

2. WATERS OF REST or "refreshment." (Not "still waters," as in the very different phrase, Is. viii. 6.)

3. PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Not merely straight paths as opposed to crooked, or level ground as opposed to hills and valleys. This is rather the blending of the natural image with its spiritual counterpart. The God of providence is the God of grace, and who can tell where the one ends and the other begins? Providence runs up into grace, and grace loses itself in providence.

FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE—not for my deserving, but out of His own goodness, for the manifestation of His own glory, and the furtherance of His kingdom upon earth.

4. This consciousness of Divine protection is his support, not only in quiet times, but even when dangers

- Thy rod and thy staff—they comfort me.  
 5 Thou preparest a table before me,  
     In the presence of mine enemies :  
 Thou hast anointed my head with oil,  
     My cup runneth over.  
 6 Surely goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all  
     the days of my life,  
 And I will dwell in the house of Jehovah for length of  
     days.

threaten. "Even though I should be called upon to walk," &c.

THEY,—emphatic, because they are *Thy* rod and *Thy* staff.

5, 6. A guest at a royal banquet. God is even more than a shepherd who provides for the wants of his sheep. He is a king who lavishes his bounty in rich provision for his guests. This is an image also adopted by our Lord in His parables. (Matt. xxii. 1, &c.)

5. PREPARE A TABLE, the common formula for furnishing a meal, Prov. ix. 2; Is. xxi. 5; Ezek. xxiii. 41.

IN THE PRESENCE OF MINE ENEMIES, *i.e.* who look on, but cannot harm me. The addition of this remark would intimate that we have more here than merely a figure. Some recollection of the past seems to break out which probably suggested it.

On the anointing the head, which was customary at banquets, comp. xcii. 10.

6. I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH FOR LENGTH OF DAYS. What did the Psalmist mean by this? The house of Jehovah might refer primarily to the tabernacle, as later to the temple. And if so, that to which he looked forward was access to God in His sanctuary, and the blessedness of communion with Him there. But is there no more than this? no anticipation of a more perfect and abiding blessedness in the everlasting sanctuary above? To us the language seems to bear such a meaning. It may not have done so to David. To him it was enough that he was the sheep or whom the Divine Shepherd cared, the guest for whom the Divine Host provided. He was thinking, perhaps, of this life more than of the next.

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## PSALM XXIV.

THIS grand choral Hymn was in all probability composed and sung on the occasion of the removal of the Ark from the house of Obed-Edom, to the city of David on Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi.). It was a day

of solemn gladness and triumph. From henceforth this mountain-city was to be the seat of the royal residence, and the centre of religious worship; and hither David determined to bring the Ark, which had been left for nearly fifty years neglected at Kirjath-jearim.

It seems quite evident that the Psalm was intended to be sung in antiphonal measure, voice answering to voice, and chorus to chorus. Seven choirs of singers and musicians, so Josephus tells us, preceded the Ark on this occasion, as the king commanded, he himself playing upon the harp, and dancing before Jehovah with all his might.

We may suppose the whole congregation, as they wound in festal procession up the sacred hill, to have begun the solemn strain: "Jehovah's is the earth, and the fulness thereof," &c. (ver. 1, 2). Then one choir, or it may have been only a single voice, asked the question in ver. 3. "Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah?" &c., and was answered by another choir, or another voice, in ver. 4, "He that is clean of hands," &c.; whilst both finally united in ver. 5, 6, "He shall receive a blessing," &c. After this prelude, the singing ceased for a time (as the *Selah* seems to indicate), and the musical instruments only were heard. In the second part, a band of Priests and Levites heading the procession have already passed within the gates, as representatives of the holy nation. And whilst the rest of the vast assembly, as it still ascends, bursts forth with the magnificent choral hymn, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," &c., the company from within reply, "Who is the King of Glory?" who thus demands admittance; and again the answer peals back from the choir without, as with a voice of many waters, "Jehovah of Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

The Psalm, then, consists of two principal divisions:—

I. The preparation for the entry of Jehovah into His holy mountain. Ver. 1—6.

II. The entry itself. Ver. 7—10.

[A PSALM OF DAVID.]

I. 1 JEHOVAH'S is the earth, and the fulness thereof;  
The world, and they that dwell therein:



- 2 For HE hath founded it upon (the) seas,  
And upon (the) streams doth He make it fast.
- 3 "Who shall ascend into the mountain of Jehovah?  
And who shall stand in His holy place?"
- 4 "He that is clean of hands and pure of heart,  
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,  
And hath not sworn deceitfully."—
- 5 "He shall receive a blessing from Jehovah,  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
- 6 This is the generation of them that seek after Him,  
That seek Thy face, [O God of] Jacob!" [Selah.]

- I. 7 "Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,  
That the King of Glory may come in."

2. SEAS—STREAMS. The reference is no doubt to the account of the creation, in Genesis, the dry land having emerged from the water, and seeming to rest upon it. (Comp. cxxxvi. 6, Prov. viii. 29.)

It may be mentioned as a curiosity of Romish interpretation, that the Vulgate *super maria*, "upon the seas," was converted into *super Mariam*, "upon (the Virgin) Mary."

4. UNTO VANITY, *i.e.* either (1) the perishing things of earth, Job xv. 31; or (2) falsehood, Job xxxi. 5, which signification passes over into a wider one of moral evil in general, cxix. 37; or (3) false gods, idols, xxxi. 6. It may be taken here in the widest sense of all that the human heart puts in the place of God.

5. We are here told in other words (as at the close of Ps. xv.) who is thus worthy to enter the holy place.

A BLESSING, such as Abraham's seed might look for (Gen. xv. 6).

RIGHTEOUSNESS, not in the New Testament sense of justification, but in the Old Testament acceptance of

inward and outward holiness; but still even this regarded as a *gift* from the God of his *salvation*. For this connection between *salvation* and *righteousness*, see the note on lxxi. 15, and cf. cxxxii. 9, 16, and especially the prophecy of Isaiah, xlv. 22, 24, xlvii. 13, li. 5, lvi. 1.

6. SUCH ARE THEY, lit. "This is the generation of them," &c.

7—10. The entry of Jehovah as the King of Glory into His sanctuary. The festal procession has now reached the gates of the city of Zion. "The singers go before, the minstrels follow after," and in the midst of these is the Ark, "whose name is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubim" (2 Sam. vi. 2); so that the entry of the Ark is the entry of Jehovah Himself into Zion (Num. x. 35). By a sublime figure the poet bids "the everlasting gates" of that grey old fortress be lifted up; for the greatest and most glorious of all kings is He who now enters in, to claim it for Himself. David had taken the stronghold from the hands of the

8 "Who, then, is the King of Glory?"

"Jehovah, strong and mighty;  
Jehovah, mighty in battle."

9 "Lift up your heads, O ye gates,  
Yea lift them up, ye everlasting doors,  
That the King of Glory may come in!"

10 "Who, then, is that King of Glory?"

"Jehovah of Hosts,  
He is the King of Glory." [Selah.]

Jebusites. But not David, but Jehovah, is the true King of Zion. The gates are termed "gates of old," or "everlasting," as being of a hoar antiquity, possibly also with the hopeful anticipation that they would abide for ever.

This Psalm is no doubt prophetic, or rather typical in its character. It has been appointed by the Church as one of the Psalms for Ascension Day;

and most fitly, in its Christian application, celebrates the return of Christ as the King of Glory to His heavenly throne, and the inauguration of that dominion which He thence exercises in the world. It will be fully accomplished when the doors of all hearts, all temples, and all kingdoms, shall be thrown wide before Him; when He shall be acknowledged upon earth as He is acknowledged in heaven.

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## PSALM XXV.

THIS is an acrostic or alphabetical Psalm, the first verse beginning with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the other letters following in order at the beginning of each successive verse. The order indeed is not perfectly observed, as we find also in another alphabetical Psalm, the 34th. Indeed, the last verse of these two Psalms not only begins with the same letter, but with the same *word*, "redeem." Here the prayer is that God would *redeem* Israel; there it is said that He *redeems* the soul of His servants. This looks like design. It would seem to indicate that the same person was author of both poems, and that the condition of the people was the same at the time they were written. We have no means of fixing what that

time was, but they probably both belong to the later period of the history—perhaps to the time of the Exile. Other Psalms which are constructed on a similar principle are the 37th, the 111th, 112th, 119th, and 145th.

The Psalm hardly admits of formal division. It is a prayer for instruction and forgiveness.

The recurrence of certain expressions, such as “waiting” and “being ashamed” (ver. 2, 3, 5, 20, 21); “affliction” and “afflicted” (ver. 9 *bis*, 16, 18); the prayer for “instruction” (ver. 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 14), together with earnest entreaty for “forgiveness” (ver. 7, 11, 18), gives a peculiar character to the Psalm. Its prevailing thought is that God is the teacher of the afflicted, and the guide of the erring; and this is constantly repeated either in the way of statement or of prayer.

[(A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

- I. 1 (Aleph) UNTO Thee, O Jehovah, do I lift up my soul.
- 2 (Aleph) O my God, in Thee have I trusted;  
Let me not be ashamed,  
Let not mine enemies triumph over me.
- 3 (Gimel) Yea, none that wait on Thee shall be ashamed;  
They shall be ashamed who are faithless  
without cause.
- 4 (Daleth) Thy ways, O Jehovah, make me to know;  
Teach me Thy paths:
- 5 (He) Guide me in Thy truth, and teach me;  
For Thou art the God of my salvation:  
On Thee do I wait all the day.
- 6 (Zain) Remember Thy tender mercies, O Jehovah,  
and Thy loving-kindnesses,  
For they have been ever of old.

1. UNTO THEE, emphatic, not to any false god, or to any human deliverer. Similarly ver. 2, 5.

5. LEAD ME IN THY TRUTH, more lit. “Cause me to walk in Thy faithfulness,” *i.e.* let me ever live in the

experience of it, that I may not be like the faithless ones who are put to shame.

6. Comp. Gen. viii. 1, ix. 15, xix. 29, &c. An appeal to the unchangeableness of God’s nature, as well as a

7 (Cheth) The sins of my youth and my transgressions  
remember not ;  
According to Thy loving-kindness re-  
member THOU me,  
For Thy goodness' sake, O Jehovah.

II. 8 (Teth) Good and upright is Jehovah,  
Therefore doth He teach sinners in the way.

9 (Yod) He guideth the afflicted in judgement.  
And teacheth the afflicted His way !

10 (Caph) All the paths of Jehovah are loving-kindness  
and truth,  
To them that keep His covenant and His  
testimonies.

11 (Lamed) For Thy Name's sake, O Jehovah,  
Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.

12 (Mem) What man is he that feareth Jehovah ?  
Him doth He teach the way that he should  
choose.

13 (Nun) His soul shall dwell at ease,  
And his seed shall inherit the land.

calling to mind of past mercies. But sin is that which shuts out God's mercy, and hence the prayer for forgiveness in the next verse.\*

8. SINNERS, here apparently with reference to the etymology of the word, those that "have erred and strayed" from the way.

9. THE AFFLICTED, see on ix. 12.

10. LOVING-KINDNESS (or grace) AND TRUTH. See John i. 17.

11. Again a prayer for forgiveness, that the grace and truth (ver. 10) may be manifested to his soul. The mention of the keeping of the covenant (ver.

10) suggests the thought of manifold failure, and the consequent need of pardon.

12. WHAT MAN IS HE? or simply, "Whosoever he is that feareth," &c. ; see xxxiv. 12.

13. SHALL DWELL, lit. "pass the night," but used in the more extended sense, as in xlix. 12, xci. 1, Prov. xix. 23.

AT EASE, lit. "in prosperity."

SHALL INHERIT THE LAND. Cf. Exod. xx. 12, Lev. xxvi. 4, Deut. iv. 1, &c.

\* The Autobiography of Petrarch closes with a quotation from this verse: "I pray to Christ that He may have mercy upon me, and may pardon and forget my youthful offences, and in this my solitude, no words sound sweeter upon my lips than those of the Psalm, 'Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions.'"

- 14 (Samech) The secret of Jehovah is for them that  
fear Him,  
And His covenant doth He make them  
know.
- 15 (Ayin) Mine eyes are ever towards Jehovah,  
For He shall pluck my feet out of the net.
- 16 (Pe) Turn Thee to me, and be gracious unto me,  
For I am desolate and afflicted.
- 17 (Tsaddi) My heart is (full of) troubles: O set it at  
liberty,  
And bring me out of my distresses,
- 18 (Resh) Look upon my affliction and my toil,  
And forgive all my sins.
- 19 (Resh) Look upon mine enemies; for they are many,  
And they hate me with cruel hatred.
- 20 (Shin) O keep my soul, and deliver me.  
Let me not be ashamed; for I trust in Thee.
- 21 (Tau) Let perfectness and uprightness preserve me;  
For I wait on Thee.
- 22 (Pe) Redeem Israel, O God.  
Out of all his troubles.

14. SECRET. As God said, Gen. xviii. 17, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Or the word rather means "close and intimate communion," in which God makes Himself known to the soul. See lv.

14, Prov. iii. 21, Job xxix. 4. God alone possesses the truth, for He is the truth, and therefore He alone can impart it, and He imparts it only to them that fear Him.

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PSALM XXVI.

THIS Psalm has some points of resemblance, both in thought and expression, to the last. Both open with the same declaration of trust in God (xxv. 2, xxvi. 1); in both there is the same prayer that God would redeem (xxv. 22, and xxvi. 11) and be gracious (xxv. 16, xxvi. 11) to His servants. Other points of contact may be found in xxv. 21, xxvi. 11, and xxv. 5, xxvi. 3. There is, however, this marked

difference between the two, that there are wanting, in this Psalm, those touching confessions of sinfulness and pleadings for forgiveness which in the other are thrice repeated. Here is only the avowal of conscious uprightness, an avowal solemnly made as in the sight of the Searcher of hearts, and deriving, no doubt, much of its intensity and almost impassioned force, from the desire, on the part of the singer, to declare his entire separation from, and aversion to, the vain and evil men by whom he is surrounded.

The Psalm furnishes no direct evidence as to its date, but it may have been composed during Absalom's rebellion. His partisans may especially be hinted at in the "vain men" and "dissemblers" of ver. 4, who had recently been unmasked; for Absalom, it is said, "had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel."

[(A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

- 1 JUDGE me, O Jehovah,  
For I have walked in my integrity,  
And in Jehovah have I trusted without wavering.
- 2 Prove me, O Jehovah, and try me,  
Purify my reins and my heart :
- 3 For Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes,  
And my conversation hath been in Thy truth.

1. JUDGE ME, *i.e.* vindicate my cause, so that my innocency may be made manifest :—do me justice (as vii. 8, xxxv. 24).

INTEGRITY, not moral perfection, but uprightness of heart, conscious sincerity of intention, is meant (see Gen. xx. 5, 1 Kings ix. 4; and this, as resting on that unwavering trust in God which follows.

2. PROVE . . . PURIFY. Words used of the testing of metals, the last especially of trying and refining them by means of smelting, xii. 6, lxvi. 10. The REINS, as the seat of the lower animal passions; the HEART, as comprising not only the higher affections, but also the will and the conscience.

He thus desires to keep nothing back; he will submit himself to the searching flame of the Great Refiner, that all dross of self-deception may be purged away.

3. This verse gives the reason for the foregoing prayer.

LOVING-KINDNESS . . . TRUTH.  
See above on xxv. 10.

We have here again those strong assertions of conscious innocence, united even with an appeal to the searching scrutiny of God Himself, which we have noticed in other Psalms, (See xvii. 3, xviii. 20—24.) The explanations given on those passages will apply here. It is clear, on the one hand, that this is no Pharisaic boast.

- 4 I have not sat with vain persons,  
Neither do I go in with dissemblers ;  
5 I hate the congregation of evil-doers,  
And with the wicked do I not sit.  
6 I wash my hands in innocency,  
That so I may compass Thine altar, O Jehovah,  
7 To make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard,  
And to tell of all Thy wondrous works.  
8 Jehovah, I love the habitation of Thine house,  
And the place where Thy glory dwelleth.  
9 Gather not my soul with sinners,  
Nor my life with bloody men ;  
10 In whose hand are evil designs,  
And whose right hand is full of bribes ;—  
11 Whilst as for me, in mine integrity do I walk :  
Redeem me and be gracious unto me.  
12 My foot standeth upon even ground :  
Among the congregations will I bless Jehovah.

The trust in God, the eye fixed on His loving-kindness, the prayer to be proved and tried, could not proceed from a Pharisee. On the other hand, it must always be borne in mind, that the full depth and iniquity of sin was not disclosed to the saints of the Old Test. Sin could only appear to be sin in all its blackness and malignity when it was brought into the full light of the Cross of Christ. And it is only as any man grasps that cross, that he can bear to look into the pollution which cleaves to his nature.

4. VAIN PERSONS, or, "men of vanity," as Job xi. 11. On this word "vanity" see note on xxiv. 4. It signifies all the emptiness of the creature apart from God.

6. I WASH MY HANDS. Here of course only a figurative expression, though the action itself was often sym-

bolical (Deut. xxi. 6, Matt. xxvii. 24), after the fashion of the East, where it is common to address the eye as well as the ear. The figure is borrowed apparently from Exod. xxx. 17--21, where Aaron and his sons are commanded to wash their hands and feet before they approach to do service at the altar.

THAT SO I MAY COMPASS. This compassing, or going round the altar, was, it would seem from this passage, a part of the ritual of Divine worship, and was performed with the accompaniment of music and singing, as may be gathered from the next verse.

8. I LOVE, &c., the antithesis to ver. 5, "I hate the congregation of evil-doers."

9. Thus he would have God judge him (ver. 1), *i.e.* declare what he is, by separating him from the wicked.

## PSALM XXVII.

THIS Psalm, like the last, and the one which follows, may very probably be referred to the time of Absalom's rebellion. All alike are characterized by the affectionate remembrance of God's sanctuary, as of one who was debarred from the privilege of constant and uninterrupted access to it.

The Psalm consists of two parts. The first (ver. 1—6) is an expression of the most assured confidence in Jehovah, whatever enemies may threaten. The second (ver. 7—14) is an earnest cry for help and comfort in present need, out of which the soul rises again to hopeful trust in God.

[A PSALM OF DAVID.]

I. 1 JEHOVAH is my Light and my Salvation:

Whom shall I fear?

Jehovah is the defence of my life:

Of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the evil-doers came near unto me

To eat up my flesh—

My adversaries and mine enemies to (do) *me* (harm),

*They* themselves stumbled and fell.

3 Though a host should encamp against me,

My heart will not be afraid:

Though there rise up war against me,

I. MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION  
... THE DEFENCE (or bulwark) OF MY  
LIFE. This, says Calvin, is the triple  
shield which he opposes to all the  
different terrors which threaten him.  
MY LIGHT—the only instance of the  
direct application of this name to God

in the Old Test. But see xviii. 28,  
xxxvi. 9, lxxxiv. 11, and Deut. xxx.  
20, "He is thy Life."

2. TO EAT UP MY FLESH, an image  
taken from wild beasts; see Job  
xix. 22.

3. A HOST. Lit. "though a CAMP



For all this do I trust.

4 One thing have I asked of Jehovah,

That will I seek after :

That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah

All the days of my life ;

To behold the beauty of Jehovah,

And to look with pleasure upon His temple.

5 For He shall keep me privily in His tabernacle in the day of evil.

He shall hide me in the hiding-place of His tent ;

On a rock shall He set me up on high.

6 And now shall my head be set up above mine enemies round about me :

So will I offer in His tent sacrifices of shouting,

So will I sing, yea I will make melody unto Jehovah.

II. 7 Hear, O Jehovah, when I cry with my voice,

Be gracious also unto me and answer me.

8 To Thee hath my heart said : "Seek ye My face—"

should encamp against me," but the English idiom would hardly admit of such a rendering.

4. The supreme blessedness of a life entirely devoted, like that of the priests, to the service of God, seems often to have forced itself upon the minds of the holy Psalmists (see xv., xxiii., lxxv., lxxxiv., &c., and note on xxvi. 8), and upon none more than upon that of David, who was compelled so often to wander at a distance from the sanctuary. There is the same feeling here of the perfect security and abounding happiness of such a dwelling-place as in Psalm xxiii. 6. Indeed the two Psalms have much in common.

TEMPLE, here, as is evident from what follows, applied to the tabernacle. (See note on Ps. v. 7.) But I have retained the word, as it is employed by our translators, in 1 Sam. iii. 3, to denote the building at Shiloh.

5. The tent or tabernacle here spoken of, was not the Mosaic tabernacle of the congregation—for that remained at Gibeon till Solomon removed it to the Temple (see 2 Chron. i. 3, 4)—but the tent which David erected for the Ark, when he removed it to Zion (2 Sam. vi. 17).

6. SACRIFICES OF SHOUTING : a stronger form of expression than the usual "sacrifices of thanksgiving," and equivalent to "sacrifices accompanied with the loud and glad expression of thankfulness," with perhaps an allusion to Num. x. 10.

7. The triumphant strain of confidence now gives way to one of sad and earnest entreaty.

8. The words SEEK YE MY FACE are the words of God, which the servant of God here, as it were, takes from His mouth, that so laying them before God, he may make his appeal

- “Thy face, Jehovah, will I seek.”
- 9 Hide not Thy face from me ;  
Put not Thy servant away in anger :  
Thou hast been my help ; cast me not away,  
Neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
- 10 For my father and my mother (may) have forsaken me;  
But Jehovah taketh me up.
- 11 Teach me, O Jehovah, Thy way,  
And lead me in an even path,  
Because of mine adversaries.
- 12 Give me not over into the will of mine adversaries ;  
For false witnesses have risen up against me,  
And they that breathe out violence.
- 13 Oh did I not believe to see the goodness of Jehovah  
In the land of the living !—
- 14 Wait on Jehovah,  
Be strong, and let thine heart be of good courage ;  
Wait, I say, on Jehovah.

the more irresistible. Thou hast said, “Seek ye My face ;” my heart makes those words its own, and builds upon them its resolve. It takes them up and repeats them, “Seek ye My face.” It first claims thus Thine own gracious words, O Lord, and then its echo to those words is, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” Such is the soul’s dialogue with itself, when it would comfort itself in God. We are reminded of that touching scene in the Gospel history, where another, a woman of Canaan, in like manner overcomes the Saviour with His own words : “Yea, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs,” &c. Mark vii. 28.

10. Some have supposed that the allusion in this verse is to the time of

Saul’s persecution, when David was compelled to separate from his parents, and leave them under the protection of the king of Moab, 1 Sam. xxii. 3. But, as Delitzsch observes, he left them, not they him. It is better therefore to understand the expression hypothetically : “(Though) my father and my mother may have forsaken me,” *i.e.* though my condition be helpless and friendless as that of a child deserted of his parents, there is One who watches over me and will take me to His bosom. See Is. lxiii. 16, xlix. 15.

TAKETH ME UP. “Receives me under His care and protection,” or perhaps, as Stier suggests, “adopts me as His child ;” see xxii. 10.

## PSALM XXVIII.

AFTER earnestly beseeching God to hear him (ver. 1, 2), the Psalmist prays that he may not be involved in the evil doings of the wicked (ver. 3); and that they may receive righteous punishment (ver. 4, 5). He thanks God that He has heard his prayer (ver. 6, 7), and, acknowledging Him as the Saviour both of king and people (ver. 8), entreats Him to help and bless, and feed His heritage for ever (ver. 9).

There is no valid reason why we should reject the traditional title which gives the Psalm to David. Like the two preceding Psalms, it might very well have been composed at the time of Absalom's rebellion. Verses 2 and 3 bear a close resemblance to Ps. xxvi. 8, 9.

[A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 To Thee, O Jehovah, do I cry ;  
     O my Rock, hold not Thy peace towards me !  
     Lest, if Thou be silent from me,  
         I become like them that go down into the pit.
- 2 Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to Thee,  
     When I lift up my hands toward the innermost place  
         of Thy sanctuary.
- 3 Draw me not away with the wicked.  
     And with the workers of iniquity;

1, 2. The earnestness of the cry is to be measured not only by the greatness of the peril which threatened, but by the faith which cleaves to God, knowing that in *Him only* is there help. HOLD NOT THY PEACE TOWARDS ME : *i.e.* "Turn not away from

me in silence." The expression is often applied to God, with reference to prayer which seems to remain unanswered : see xxxv. 22, xxxix. 12, lxxxiii. 1, cix. 1, &c., and compare lxii. 1, 5, lxxv. 1.

3. DRAW ME NOT AWAY, *viz.* to

- Who speak peace with their neighbours,  
 But wickedness is in their hearts.
- 4 Give them according to their work,  
 And according to the wickedness of their doings ;  
 According to the operation of their hands give them,  
 Requite them that they have deserved ;
- 5 For they have no regard to the works of Jehovah,  
 Nor to the operation of His hands :  
 (Therefore) shall He break them down, and not build  
 them up.
- 6 Blessed be Jehovah,  
 For He hath heard the voice of my supplications.
- 7 Jehovah is my Strength and my Shield ;  
 In Him hath my heart trusted, and I am helped ;  
 Therefore my heart leapeth for joy,  
 And with my song will I praise Him.
- 8 Jehovah is their strength,  
 And He is the saving defence of His Anointed.

destruction with them, as in Ezek. xxxii. 20. See also Job xxiv. 22. The same sentiment above, xxvi. 9.

WHO SPEAK PEACE, &c. Perhaps the same as the "dissemblers," in xxvi. 4. We might almost suppose a reference to the arts by which Absalom secretly undermined David's authority, and "stole away the hearts" of the people, before he broke out into open rebellion. But the prayer which follows in the next verse David would not have offered against Absalom. The aiders and abettors of the rebellion may, however, have been in his mind.

4. GIVE THEM: of a judicial act, Hos. ix. 14. With the language of this and the next verse, comp. Is. i. 15, 16, iii. 8 — 11, v. 19. I have spoken elsewhere of these prayers for vengeance upon the wicked, which sometimes meet us in the Psalms. (See note at the end of Psalm xxxv.) In this instance certainly there is no trace of

the expression of personal animosity and the mere desire of revenge. It is rather an appeal to God's justice to deal with the righteous and the wicked according to their deserts.

5. The reason why God's judgement should overtake the wicked, not their malice against the Psalmist, but their disregard of the Most High. See x. 4, and Is. v. 12, 19. The works of Jehovah and the operation of His hands are in manifest opposition to those of the wicked in ver. 4.

6. In his own heart he has already received the answer to his prayer. He knows that God will fulfil his petitions, and therefore breaks out in the glad certainty of faith, "Blessed be Jehovah," &c. The certainty that prayer is heard anticipates its visible fulfilment.

7. WITH MY SONG, lit. *out of* my song ; the song being, as it were, the source from which the praise flowed.

8. THEIR STRENGTH: the pron.

9 O save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance :  
Feed them also, and bear them up for ever.

thus emphatically mentioned before the word "people" to which it refers in the last verse. See a similar instance in ix. 12, lxxxvii. 1.

First the people, then himself their monarch, but not David the man, but David the king as anointed of God, and chosen to feed His people.

9. *Thy* PEOPLE, *Thine* INHERITANCE. In those words are his plea

with God. It is impossible not to see in these tender, loving words, "feed them and bear them," the heart of the shepherd-king. Feed them, O Thou true Shepherd of Israel (lxxx. 1) : bear them, carry them in Thine arms (Is. lxiii. 9, xl. 11). Perhaps the reference may be to Deut. i. 31 ; xxxii. 12. Compare with this the conclusion of Ps. iii.

## PSALM XXIX.

THIS Psalm is a magnificent description of a thunder-storm. Its mighty march from north to south, the desolation and terror which it causes, the peal of the thunder, the flash of the lightning, even the gathering fury and lull of the elements, are vividly depicted.

The Psalm consists of five parts ; a prelude, the body of the poem in three divisions, and a conclusion. The structure of the whole is highly artificial, and elaborated with a symmetry of which no more perfect specimen exists in Hebrew. But this evidently artificial mode of composition is no check to the force and fire of the Poet's genius, which kindles, and glows, and sweeps along with all the freedom and majesty of the storm ; the whole Psalm being one continued strain of triumphant exultation.

I. In the prelude, the singer lifts our thoughts at once from earth to heaven, by calling on the angels who stand around the throne of God to praise Him who manifests His glory in the thunder and lightning which He sends upon the earth. Ver. 1, 2.

II. Then follows the description of the storm in the three strophes which constitute the main body of the Poem. These are so constructed, that the first (ver. 3, 4) gives us the beginning of the storm, the low, faint, muttering thunder in the distant heavens ; the next

(ver. 5—7) describes the storm at its height, when it crashes the cedars, and shakes the mountains; the last (ver. 8, 9) tells how it passes on over the plain country to the forest of Kadesh in the south, where it dies away.

But not only the arrangement of the three strophes, but the structure of each separate strophe, contributes in a very striking degree to the whole effect of the Poem. Each consists of five members, and each begins with a fresh burst and closes with a lull in the tempest.

i. Thus, in the first strophe, we hear the first yet distant sound of the thunder in the words, "The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters." In the next two clauses, "The God of glory thundereth; Jehovah is upon many waters," the long loud peal grows more distinct, whilst ver. 4 again is pitched in a lower key, as if telling us of a pause in the storm.

ii. In the next strophe we have again, (*a*) first, the renewed fury of the tempest, as, coming nearer yet, it falls on the glory of Lebanon, and breaks her cedars in its might: "The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars," &c. (*b*) Next, gathering with a wilder intensity of wrath, it bursts upon the mountain peaks, roaring amid their rocks and shattering them, and making the everlasting hills themselves to tremble as with the throes of an earthquake, so that "Lebanon and Sirion skip like the young of the wild ox." (*c*) Lastly, we hear it sinking down in the line which describes the flashing of the forked lightning: "The voice of Jehovah cleaveth the flames of fire." Ver. 5—7.

iii. Again the same structure is observable. One long peal after another has rolled and reverberated along the sky, and now the storm, in its jubilant strength, sweeps the whole land from north to south. (*a*) Again it is up in its majesty: "The voice of Jehovah maketh the wilderness to tremble." (*b*) Again its last fury is poured out upon the wilderness of Kadesh. The very hinds bow themselves in travail-pangs, and the forest is torn open and laid bare, as the hurricane drives through it in its path. (*c*) And again the tempest is stilled, but this time its voice is hushed and lost for ever in the music and songs of the heavenly host: "In His temple all that are therein cry, Glory." Ver. 8, 9.

III. The conclusion consists, like the prelude, of two verses, each of two members. And here we are beautifully reminded that Jehovah, whom the angels praise, and who both *rules* and *stills* the

elements in their wildest uproar, is the same Jehovah who gives *strength* and *peace* to His people. Ver. 10, 11.

In the modern synagogue, this Psalm stands in the Jewish liturgy to be used on the first day of Pentecost (Shebuoth).

[A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 GIVE unto Jehovah, O ye sons of God,  
Give unto Jehovah glory and strength.
- 2 Give unto Jehovah the glory due to His Name.  
Worship Jehovah in holy attire.
- 3 The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters,  
The God of glory thundereth ;  
Jehovah is upon many waters ;
- 4 The voice of Jehovah is in might,  
The voice of Jehovah is in majesty.
- 5 The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars,  
Yea Jehovah breaketh the cedars of Lebanon ;
- 6 And He maketh them to skip like a calf,  
Lebanon and Sirion like the young of the wild ox :
- 7 The voice of Jehovah cleaveth the flames of fire.

1. SONS OF GOD, "the angels," as in Job ii. 1.

2. IN HOLY ATTIRE, heaven being thought of as one great temple, and all the worshipers therein as clothed in priestly garments, and doing perpetual service. In the earthly temple, in like manner, Priests and Levites arrayed themselves on occasions of solemn pomp. Cf. 2 Chr. xx. 21, where E.V. has "beauty of holiness," Ps. cx. 3, where see note.

3. THE WATERS. This may either refer to the Mediterranean Sea, from which the storm comes up (as J. D. Michaelis), or to "the waters above the firmament," the dense lowering

masses of the storm-cloud charged with water. Probably the latter. See xviii. 11.

4. IN MIGHT. . . IN MAJESTY. The attributes of God as displayed in the storm.

6. SIRION, *i.e.* Anti-Lebanon, acc. to Deut. iii. 9, the Sidonian name of Hermon.

7. With every thunder-peal comes the terrible forked lightning, so striking in tropical and Eastern lands. Its vivid, zigzag, serpent-like flash is given in a few words.

CLEAVETH THE FLAMES OF FIRE, *i.e.* parts the blaze of the lightning, so as to give it the forked appearance.

- 8 The voice of Jehovah maketh the wilderness to tremble.  
 Jehovah maketh the wilderness of Kadesh to tremble.  
 9 The voice of Jehovah maketh the hinds to calve,  
 And layeth the forests bare:—  
 And in His temple all that is therein uttereth, "Glory."  
 10 Jehovah sat throned above the Flood :  
 Yea Jehovah sitteth throned a King for ever.  
 11 Jehovah giveth strength to His people ;  
 Jehovah blesseth His people with peace.

8. KADESH, in the south of Palestine, thus indicating the course taken by the storm. It sweeps the land from north to south. "The geographical notices of its situation," says Stanley, of Kadesh, "are unfortunately too slight to be of much service. Yet thus much they fix, that it was 'in the wilderness of Zin,' that it was 'on the edge of the border of Edom,' that it was near Mount Hor, that it was at the southern point to which the territory of Judah afterwards reached." He then gives reasons for identifying Kadesh with Petra. Travelling in the direction it did, the storm would first reach the 'Arabah, and then pass on to the acacias, and palms, and vegetation which clothe the rocks of sandstone in the neighbourhood of Petra. See Stanley's interesting account of his journey in the opposite direction, from Petra to Palestine through the 'Arabah. (*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 94, &c.)

9. MAKETH THE HINDS TO CALVE. This is a phenomenon which is also noticed and recorded as a fact by Arabian poets.

10. FLOOD, *i.e.* the Deluge. The word here employed occurs nowhere else, except in the story of the Flood (Gen. vi.—xi.), and therefore refers, I cannot help thinking, to that great act of judgement, and not merely to a recent inundation caused by the storm,

the mountain-torrents having been swollen by the rain, and having flooded the country. This might have happened. But the selection of so peculiar a word "flood," as well as the fact that the verb is in the past tense, "*sat* throned," makes the other more probable.

Very beautiful is the conclusion of the Psalm. If, in His heavenly temple above, all that are therein ascribe "glory" to God, upon earth too He has manifested that glory. He sat as King when He sent the flood of water to destroy the earth. He sits now, and for ever will sit, as King. As then He saved the righteous man from death, so now He watches over His people : for Jehovah is the God of Israel. It was He who when the storm waxed strong gave it its strength : it was He who, when it was hushed, spread over earth, and sea and sky, the sweet sabbath stillness of peace. And He whose almighty power was seen in the march of the tempest, whose voice was heard in its wildest uproar, and whose word stilled its fiercest war, shall He not give both strength and peace? Yea, Jehovah, who is strong and mighty, will give His own strength to His people. And He who is the Prince of Peace will bless His people with peace. Thus the Psalm begins, as Delitzsch says, with a *Gloria in excelsis*, and ends with a *Pax in terris*.



## PSALM XXX.

THIS Psalm was composed after recovery from a sickness which had very nearly proved fatal. The singer begins with an ascription of praise to God for His great goodness, and calls upon all who, like himself, had known the loving-kindness of Jehovah, to join him in his thanksgiving. Thence he passes (ver. 6) to a recital of his own experience, his pleading with God in his affliction, and God's answer to his prayer.

According to the Inscription, the Psalm was composed "at the dedication of the house." But what house? Some would understand the dedication of the spot on which the Temple afterwards stood, and which David purchased of Araunah (2 Sam. xxiv., 1 Chron. xxi.). This spot, it is true, together with the altar erected there, might be called "the house of Jehovah" (as it is 1 Chron. xxii. 1), or absolutely "the house," even before the Temple was built. But if the Psalm were written for this occasion, it could not have been written by David, as he himself did not fall sick in the time of the pestilence (2 Sam. xxiv. 17).

But perhaps, if the Inscription is trustworthy, it refers to the house which David built in his new city of Zion, and the building of which he seems to have regarded as a pledge of the security and prosperity of his kingdom (2 Sam. v. 11, 12). We must, however, still suppose that he had suffered just before from a sickness about which the history is silent.

The Psalm consists of two principal divisions :—

I. A thanksgiving on recovery. Ver. 1—5.

(1) An ascription of praise. Ver. 1. The reason, viz. that God had brought him back to life from the gates of death. Ver. 2, 3.

(2) An exhortation to others to unite with him in praise. The reason, because God keepeth not His anger for ever. Ver. 4, 5.

II. A recital of the Psalmist's experience during his sickness. Ver. 6—12.

- (1) The sudden change by which he had been brought low. Ver. 6, 7.  
 (2) His prayer in his sickness. Ver. 8—10.  
 (3) The answer to his prayer and thanksgiving thereupon. Ver. 11, 12.

[A PSALM OF DAVID. A SONG AT THE DEDICATION OF THE HOUSE.]

- I. 1 I WILL extol Thee, O Jehovah, for Thou hast lifted  
   me up,  
           And hast not made mine enemies to rejoice over me.  
 2 O Jehovah, my God,  
           I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me.  
 3 O Jehovah, Thou hast brought up my soul from the  
           grave :  
           Thou hast restored me to life, that I should not be of  
           them that go down into the pit.  
 4 Sing praises unto Jehovah, O ye beloved of His,  
           And give thanks to His holy name :  
 5 For His anger is but for a moment,  
           His favour for a life long :  
   At even, weeping may come in for a night,  
           But with the morning is a shout of joy.

1. THOU HAST LIFTED ME UP, lit. "Thou hast drawn me up" (*i.e.* as a bucket is drawn up out of a well). It has been inferred from this expression, that the Psalm was written by Jeremiah when he was taken up out of the dungeon. But this is turning poetry into prose. The word is clearly metaphorical.

4. HIS HOLY NAME, lit. "His holy memorial," with reference, no doubt, to the passage, Exod. iii. 15, "This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial to all generations." God's Name is His revelation of Himself, in all His various attributes of Love,

Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Truth, Righteousness. God's memorial is that great history of redemption which was, so to speak, the setting up of a monument to His glory, on which all these attributes were inscribed.

5. A reason why God's saints should praise Him, because He manifests Himself to them in love, not in wrath, or if in wrath, but for a moment. Love rules over all. The literal rendering of the verse is : "For in His anger is (but) a moment, in His favour a life : in the evening weeping may come in to pass the night ; but with the morning (there is) a shout of joy."

- II. 6 And as for me—I have said, in my prosperity,  
 “I shall not be moved for ever.”  
 7 Thou, O Jehovah, by Thy favour hadst made my  
 mountain to stand strong:  
 Thou didst hide Thy face:—I was troubled.  
 8 (Then) to Thee, O Jehovah, did I begin to cry,  
 Yea to Jehovah I made supplication: (saying,)  
 9 “What profit is there in my blood, when I go down  
 to the pit?  
 Shall the dust give thanks to Thee? shall it declare  
 Thy truth?  
 10 Hear, O Jehovah, and be gracious unto me;  
 O Jehovah, be Thou my helper.”  
 11 (And) Thou didst turn for me my mourning into  
 dancing;  
 Thou didst put off my sackcloth, and didst gird  
 me with joy;

The parallelism is carefully preserved in each member: “anger—favour;” “a moment—a life;” “evening—morning;” “weeping—joy.”

We must not repeat the verb “pass the night,” with the second clause. Weeping is described in the first under the image of a wayfarer who comes in at the evening to lodge for the night. The suddenness and surprise of gladness, on the other hand, in the morning are beautifully represented by the simple “at dawn a shout of joy,” without a verb. Just as the sun in Eastern lands, without any long prelude of twilight to announce his coming, leaps as it were in a moment above the horizon, so does the light of God’s love dispel in a moment the long night and darkness of sorrow. See the beautiful parallel, *Is. liv. 7, 8.*

7. HADST MADE STRONG, *lit.* “Thou didst make strength to stand to my mountain:” or perhaps “Thou didst place a fortress upon my mountain.” The language is clearly figu-

rative, though the emblem no doubt is borrowed from the stronghold of Zion.

9. He now gives us the words of his prayer.

WHAT PROFIT. The earnest prayer for life, so frequent with the Old Testament saints, who walked in shadows, and who only now and then caught a glimpse of the world beyond the grave. Their faith and hope were in God, and therefore could not be bounded by things temporal; but we must remember that the promises made to them were mostly of a temporal character, and that life and immortality were not yet brought to light. In seasons of despondency, therefore, the abode of the dead (*Sheol*) seemed dark and cheerless: and there was not only a natural but even a religious recoil from death, because in this life only could men praise God. In the land of forgetfulness no Psalms could be sung. Hezekiah’s thanksgiving, *Is. xxxviii.* and many expressions in the Book of

12 To the end that (my) glory should sing praise to Thee,  
and not be silent.

O Jehovah, my God, I will give thanks unto Thee  
for ever.

Job, which last seems to have been in the Psalmist's mind, are in the same strain. The truth seems to be, that whilst *the Faith* of the Old Testament saints *in God* was strong and childlike, their *Hope of Immortality*

was at best but dim and wavering, brightening perhaps for a moment, when the heart was rejoicing in God as its portion, and then again almost dying away.

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## PSALM XXXI.

A PSALM in which earnest prayer for deliverance from trouble is kindled and animated throughout by a lively trust and hope in God. (Compare Psalms ix., xxvii.)

It consists of three principal divisions :—

I. The singer prays God to be gracious to him in his trouble, expressing at the same time his trust in Him, who in times past had been his deliverer. Ver. 1—8.

II. He pours out before God the story of his sufferings and his sorrows, beseeching Him again to lift upon him the light of His countenance, and to put his enemies to shame. Ver. 9—18.

III. He concludes with praise and thanksgiving to God for His goodness to all who trust in Him, and particularly to himself, and calls upon all the righteous to love the Lord. Ver. 19—24.

This Psalm is supposed by some to have been written by Jeremiah, and in many of its expressions there is a resemblance to the Prophet's writings. Compare Lament. iii., and Jer. xx. 10.

The phrase, "Fear on every side," ver. 13, occurs no less than six times in Jeremiah.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

1. 1 IN Thee, O Jehovah, have I made my refuge,  
Let me not be ashamed for ever;  
In Thy righteousness set me at liberty.
- 2 Incline Thine ear unto me,  
Make haste to deliver me :  
Be Thou to me a strong rock,  
A house of fortresses to save me.
- 3 For Thou art my rock and my fortress,  
And for Thy Name's sake Thou wilt lead me and  
guide me ;
- 4 Thou wilt pluck me out of the net they have laid  
privily for me,  
For THOU art my stronghold.
- 5 Into Thy hand I commend my spirit :

Ver. 1—3 are found with slight variation in lxxi. 1—3.

1. IN THY RIGHTEOUSNESS. See iv. 1, v. 8.

2. The figures here employed are the same as in xviii.

STRONG ROCK, lit. "a rock of stronghold," *i.e.* not a rock with a castle upon it, but "a rock which is itself a stronghold."

A HOUSE OF FORTRESSES : a poetical expression—a fortified place.

5. I COMMEND, *i.e.* place as a *deposit*, entrust.

With these words our Lord breathed out His life, St. Luke xxiii. 46, as He had before used words from another Psalm in His agony on the cross. The first words were from a Psalm (the 22nd) which, typically at

least, foreshadowed His sufferings ; whereas, this is not in the same way predictive. But the Holy One of God, in that last hour of mortal agony, chose these words of one of His servants, to express the solemn surrender of His life. And in so doing, He gave them a new interpretation. The Jewish singer only meant by them that he put himself and all his hopes into the hand of God. Jesus meant by them, that *by His own act, of His own free will*, He gave up His spirit, and therewith His life, to the Father. And they who have died with their Lord, have died with the same words on their lips. These were the last words of Polycarp, of Bernard, of Huss,\* of Jerome of Prague, of Luther, Melancthon, and many

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\* When the sentence of degradation from the priesthood was being executed upon John Huss, the last act of the Bishop who performed the ceremony was to pronounce the horrible words "and now we commit thy soul to the devil." To this Huss calmly replied, "I commend my spirit into Thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ; unto Thee I commend my spirit, which Thou hast redeemed." Then he was carried to the place of public execution and burned to death.

Thou hast redeemed me, Jehovah, Thou God of Truth.

6 I hate them that observe lying vanities ;  
As for me—in Jehovah do I trust.

7 I will exult and rejoice in Thy loving-kindness,  
That Thou hast seen my affliction,  
(That Thou) hast known my soul in adversities,

8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy,  
(But) hast set my feet in a large room.

II. 9 Be gracious unto me, O Jehovah, for I am in trouble :  
Mine eye is consumed with vexation,—my soul  
and my body.

10 For my life is spent with sorrow,  
And my years with sighing :  
My strength hath failed, because of mine iniquity,  
And my bones are consumed, because of all my  
adversaries.

11 I have become a reproach to my neighbours ex-  
ceedingly,  
And a terror to mine acquaintance :

They that did see me in the streets fled from me.

12 I have been forgotten as a dead man out of mind ;  
I am become like a broken vessel.

13 For I have heard the slander of many,  
Fear on every side ;  
Whilst they took their counsel together against me,  
They devised to take away my life.

14 But as for me, I have trusted in Thee, O Jehovah ;  
I have said, "Thou art my God."

others. "Blessed are they," says Luther, "who die not only *for* the Lord, as martyrs ; not only *in* the Lord, as all believers ; but likewise *with* the Lord, as breathing forth their lives in the words, 'Into Thy hand I commend my spirit.'"

THOU HAST REDEEMED ME. This gives the reason why he entrusts his spirit to God.

7. HAST KNOWN. See note on i. 6.

12. OUT OF MIND, lit. "out of heart ;" sim. "out of the mouth," Deut. xxxi. 21.

13. The first two members of the verse occur again, word for word, Jer. xx. 10, and the phrase, "terror round about," Jer. vi. 25, xx. 3, 4, xlv. 5, xlix. 29 ; Lam. ii. 22.

- 15 My times are in Thy hand :  
 Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and  
 from them that persecute me.
- 16 Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant ;  
 O save me in Thy loving-kindness !
- 17 O Jehovah, let me not be ashamed, for I have called  
 upon Thee :  
 Let the wicked be ashamed, let them be put to  
 silence in the grave ;
- 18 Let the lying lips be dumb,  
 Which speak haughtily against the righteous,  
 With pride and contempt.

- III. 19 Oh, how great is Thy goodness,  
 Which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee,  
 Which Thou hast wrought for them that find their  
 refuge in Thee,  
 In the presence of the sons of men.
- 20 Thou hidest them privily in the hiding-place of  
 Thy presence from the conspiracies of men ;  
 Thou keepest them in a tabernacle from the strife of  
 tongues.
- 21 Blessed be Jehovah,  
 That He hath showed me His marvellous loving-  
 kindness in a fenced city :
- 22 As for me—I have said in my confusion,  
 “ I am cut off from the sight of Thine eyes.”  
 Yet surely Thou didst hear the voice of my sup-  
 plications

16. The High Priest's blessing,  
 Num. vi. 25. Comp. Ps. iv. 6.

19. THOU HAST LAID UP, lit. “ hid-  
 den ; ” comp. “ the hidden manna,”  
 Rev. ii. 17.

20. THE HIDING-PLACE OF THY  
 PRESENCE, or “ of Thy countenance ; ”  
 elsewhere, of God's tabernacle, xxvii.  
 5 ; or of His wings, lxi. 4, or of His  
 shadow, xci. 1. But this is the most

striking figure of all : to be hidden in  
 the light of God's face, hidden in that  
 splendour where His power is hidden  
 (Hab. iii. 4) ; what an image at once  
 of safety and blessedness ! Milton's  
 striking expression, “ Dark with ex-  
 cess of bright,” explains how it is  
 possible to be *hidden in light*.

21. David now turns to his own  
 experience. But what is the fenced or

When I cried unto Thee.

23 O love Jehovah, all ye beloved of His!

Jehovah preserveth the faithful,

And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

24 Be of good courage, and let your heart be strong,

All ye that wait upon Jehovah.

fortified city? I incline to think there is an historical reference in the words. Possibly Ziklag may be meant. Most, however, understand it metaph= with

Thee I am *as if* I were in a fortified place.

24. ALL YE THAT WAIT. The Psalm ends as Psalm xxvii.

## PSALM XXXII.

THIS is the second of the Seven Penitential Psalms, as they are called, "which," says Selnecker, "St. Augustine used often to read with weeping heart and eyes, and which, before his death, he had written on the wall over against his sick-bed, that he might exercise himself therein, and find comfort therein in his sickness." St. Augustine's own words, "*intelligentia prima est ut te noris peccatorem*," might stand as its motto.

There can be little doubt, I think, that this Psalm was composed after Nathan came to David. Psalm li. was the confession of his great sin and the prayer for forgiveness. This Psalm is the record of the confession made and the forgiveness obtained, and the conscious blessedness of his position as a son restored to his Father's house. There was a shelter for him there now—"Thou art my hiding-place." There was joy and gladness on his return—"Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." And here he carries out the resolve of Psalm li., "Then will I teach transgressors Thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee."

The instruction of the Psalm may be summed up in the words of Prov. xxviii. 13, or in those of 1 John i. 8, 9.



[A MASKIL OF DAVID.]

- I. 1 BLESSED is he whose transgression is taken away,  
 whose sin is covered :  
 2 Blessed is the man to whom Jehovah reckoneth not  
 iniquity,  
 And in whose spirit there is no guile.  
 3 For (while) I kept silence, my bones waxed old  
 Through my roaring all the day long.  
 4 For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me ;  
 My moisture was turned into the drought of summer.  
 [Selah.]

1, 2. Sin is here (as in Ex. xxxiv. 7) spoken of under three appellations, so as to include the whole idea of sin in all its manifestations : First, as "transgression" or departure from God, and open defection from His covenant. Secondly, as "a coming short of the mark," a deflection from an aim, a *not* doing of our duty. Thirdly, as including in the idea of wrong doing, the guilt, and also the punishment. And there is a threefold blessedness. The man is one who has his *transgression taken away* (lit. who is *lightened of the burden of sin*), comp. Exod. xxxiv. 7, St. John i. 29 ; who has his *sin covered*, so that he is in God's sight as one who has not done the sin, cf. lxxxv. 2, and Is. xxxviii. 17, xliii. 25, xliv. 22. He is also one—

2. TO WHOM JEHOVAH RECKONETH NOT INIQUITY, which according to St. Paul's interpretation, Rom. iv. 6—9, is equivalent to saying that he is one whose faith is reckoned for righteousness. The non-reckoning of iniquity, and the reckoning of righteousness, are convertible terms : and the righteousness so reckoned is faith, or a righteousness without works. But God only thus forgives and justi-

fies one who, with all truth and sincerity of heart, confesses his sin, making no reservation, no excuses, no attempts still to hold fast and hide some darling lust.

NO GUILT : no falseness, that is, either to himself or to God. Of this guilelessness Leighton remarks, "Nothing is more pleasing to God, who seeth the heart, nothing more like to God ; and therefore is it most pleasing to Him, because it is most like Him."—*Meditat. Ethico-Crit.* in Psalm xxxii.

3. MY BONES ; see vi. 2, and cf. Job xiii. 28.

THROUGH MY ROARING, *i.e.* the cry extorted from the anguish of his spirit so long as he KEPT SILENCE, *i.e.* refused to confess his sin. "Sin is a serpent, and he that covers sin does but keep it warm, that it may sting the more fiercely, and disperse the venom and malignity thereof the more effectually."—*Donne*.

4. FOR (this gives the reason of his roaring) God's hand was heavy upon him (cf. 1 Samuel v. 6, 11 ; Job xxiii. 2 ; Ps. xxxviii. 2), and that hand is "premens gravissima, sublevans suavissima et potentissima."

- 5 I said, I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee,  
 And mine iniquity did I not cover.  
 I said, "I will confess my transgressions unto  
 Jehovah."  
 And THOU tookest away the iniquity of my sin.  
 [Selah.]

II. 6 For this cause let every godly man pray to Thee

In a time when Thou mayest be found ;  
 (So) surely when the great waters overflow,  
 They shall not reach unto him.

- 7 Thou art my hiding-place ;  
 Thou wilt preserve me from trouble ;  
 Thou wilt compass me about with songs of de-  
 liverance. [Selah.]

III. 8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way thou  
 shouldest go.

5. The end of the struggle—con-  
 fession, and so forgiveness and peace.  
 God covers sin, but man must not  
 cover his sin before God. "If we  
 confess our sin, He is faithful and just  
 to forgive us our sins." (1 John i. 9.)  
 The former part of this verse contains  
 the *resolve*, "I would acknowledge,"  
 &c. ; the second, the *expression* of the  
 resolve, "I said," &c.

AND THOU. The pronoun is em-  
 phatic : it was *God's* doing. To *Him*  
 he made his confession : *He* forgave.  
 The same words are used here of sin  
 and its forgiveness as in ver. 1. The  
 confession and the taking away are  
 described as simultaneous. "Vox  
 nondum est in ore," says Augustine,  
 "et vulnus sanatur in corde."

6. And now because of the grace  
 thus vouchsafed to every repentant  
 sinner, David would encourage all the  
 godly to seek Him who deals so  
 graciously with sinners.

IN A TIME WHEN THOU MAYEST  
 BE FOUND, lit. "in a time of finding,"

no object being expressed. The  
 object may either be Jehovah Himself  
 (as Is. lv. 6 ; comp. Deut. iv. 29, Jer.  
 xxix. 13), or more generally "grace  
 and forgiveness," as in the common  
 phrase "to find grace." See also  
 lxix. 13 ; Is. xlix. 8.

7. David's own joyful experience  
 of this safety, of which he is speaking  
 to others. Scarcely has he held out  
 the hope to others, when he turns with  
 a happy trustfulness to God—

THOU ART MY HIDING-PLACE. He  
 would be hidden in God. St. Paul  
 could scarcely say more, "Our life is  
 hid with Christ in God."

COMPASS ME ABOUT, *i.e.* give me  
 abundant cause, turn where I may, to  
 praise Thee. God will do this, and  
 so be the *author* as well as the *object*  
 of his praise.

8. Out of his past and present ex-  
 perience he will now counsel others,  
 and especially those who are still im-  
 penitent ; and the tenour of his counsel  
 is, that they should not, like brutes,

I will watch over thee with mine eye.

9 Be ye not as horse, (or) as mule without understanding,  
Whose trapping is with bit and bridle to hold them,  
Or else they will not come nigh unto thee.

10 Many sorrows are to the wicked;  
But whoso trusteth in Jehovah, loving-kindness compasseth him about.

11 Rejoice in Jehovah, and exult, O ye righteous,  
And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

resist and refuse submission till they are forced into it, but that they should willingly come with repentance and confession to God.

The transition here to the direct form of address in the first person is certainly abrupt. Some have supposed that these are the words of God; but perhaps David himself speaks with something of a father's warning. The

guidance with the eye is a gentle guidance. A look is enough, as opposed to that bit and bridle which the mulish nature requires.

10. The usual contrast between the lot of the ungodly and that of the righteous, as the sum of all that has been said, and as a great religious axiom.

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## PSALM XXXIII.

GOD is the God of Creation, of Providence, of Grace. This is, in a few words, the Psalmist's theme. Jehovah created the world (ver. 6, ff.). Jehovah governs the world (ver. 10, ff.); and all nations and kings, whether they acknowledge Him or not, are but instruments in His hand. Jehovah especially reveals Himself in mercy and love to His own chosen people (ver. 18, ff.). The key-note of this last sentiment is already struck in ver. 12.

This is one of the few Psalms in the First Book which in the Hebrew is without an inscription.

The Psalm consists of the following divisions:—

I. An introduction, in which the singer calls on the righteous to praise Jehovah, with all manner of music. Ver. 1—3.

Then follow the reasons why He is worthy to be praised.

II. (1) First, because He is Good and Faithful (ver. 4, 5); and next (2), because by His word all things were created. Ver. 4—9.

III. Because He is the All-wise (ver. 10, 11), All-seeing (ver. 13—15), and Almighty (ver. 16, 17) Ruler of nations. Ver. 10—17.

IV. Lastly, because He watches over (ver. 18), preserves (ver. 19), and protects (ver. 20) all those that fear Him and trust in His Holy Name. Ver. 18—21.

The Psalm concludes with a short petition, that it may be done unto Israel according to his hope.

- 1 SHOUT for joy, O ye righteous, in Jehovah ;  
For the upright, praise is comely.
- 2 Give thanks to Jehovah with a harp,  
Upon a ten-stringed lute play unto Him.
- 3 Sing unto Him a new song,  
Play skilfully on the strings with a loud noise.
- 4 For the word of Jehovah is upright ;  
And all that he doeth is faithfulness.
- 5 He loveth righteousness and judgement :  
The earth is full of the loving-kindness of Jehovah.
- 6 By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made ;  
And all their host by the breath of His mouth.
- 7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap ;  
He layeth up the depths in storehouses.

3. A NEW SONG, not here one which has new marvels of God's Power and Grace for its theme, as in xl. 3 ; xcvi. 1 (comp. Rev. xiv. 3), but rather one which springs freshly from a thankful and rejoicing heart ; one which seeks to put an old theme in a new light.

4, 5. First the *moral* attributes of God are mentioned as a reason why the righteous should praise Him. See the same attributes enumerated in xxxvi. 5, 6, with the same reference to God's providential care of His creatures. Comp. lxxxix. 14.

6. BY THE WORD, explained further ver. 9, the creative fiat as in Gen. i.

THE BREATH OF HIS MOUTH, apparently almost the same thing as "the word" before. So in Is. xi. 4, "the breath of His lips," is used of the sentence of judgement which thence issues.

7. The heaven and the sea are mentioned as the theatre of God's almighty power, as the earth before of His loving-kindness ; and thus the Universe is summed up.

AS AN HEAP, a figure I think manifestly suggested by the appearance of

- 8 Let all the earth fear before Jehovah ;  
 Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
- 9 For he said, and it was :  
 He commanded, and it stood fast.
- 10 Jehovah hath brought to naught the counsel of the nations ;  
 He hath made the thoughts of the people of none effect.
- 11 The counsel of Jehovah standeth fast for ever,  
 The thoughts of His heart to all generations.
- 12 Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah,  
 The people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance.
- 13 From heaven hath Jehovah looked,  
 He hath seen all the children of men.
- 14 From the place of His dwelling he hath looked down  
 Upon all the inhabitants of the earth,
- 15 (Even) He who fashioneth the heart of each of them,  
 Who considereth all their works.
- 16 A king doth not triumph by a great host,  
 A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
- 17 A horse is a vain thing for victory,  
 Neither can he deliver any by his great power.

the waves of the sea. The expression may have been borrowed from Josh. iii. 13—16, and Exod. xv. 8.

9. A manifest reference to Gen. i. 3 : "and God said, let Light be, and Light was."

10, 11. After speaking of God's power in creation, the Psalmist goes on to speak of His providence as ordering the world.

12. This verse already anticipates what is said more fully verses 18—20, and here we have the doctrine of God's universal Providence looked at in its special application to the chosen

people, as often : see Ps. xxiv. 1. It is, however, immediately connected with the preceding verse ; for the fact that Jehovah's counsels stand fast for ever is a matter of consolation for the people whose God He is (cxlvii. 19, 20), and whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance (xlvi. 4).

13—15. The Omnipresence and Omniscience of God. He not only observes man's doings, but knows their hearts as having created them. This is implied in ver. 15.

16, 17. The weakness and insufficiency of all human *power*, however

- 18 Behold, the eye of Jehovah is upon them that fear Him,  
 Upon them that hope in His loving-kindness.  
 19 To deliver their soul from death,  
 And to keep them alive in famine.  
 20 Our soul hath tarried for Jehovah;  
 He is our Help and our Shield.  
 21 For in Him our heart rejoiceth,  
 Because we have trusted in His Holy Name.  
 22 Let Thy loving-kindness, O Jehovah, be upon us.  
 According as we have hoped in Thee.

great, as before of all human *intellect*.  
 "King, and mighty man, and horse"  
 (*i.e.* war-horse, as elsewhere, "chariot  
 and horse"), are selected as types of  
 earthly power in all its greatness.

18. UPON: more literally, "to-  
 wards."

18—22. HOPE—TARRY—TRUST—  
 HOPE. This attitude of hope and  
 trust is the attitude of the Church in  
 all ages, for she is not yet made

perfect; but the Jewish Church was  
 in a special sense the Church of the  
 Future, and therefore also in a special  
 manner a waiting and hoping Church.  
 The whole history of Israel may,  
 indeed, be summed up in Jacob's  
 dying words: "I have waited for Thy  
 salvation, O Lord." The Hebrew  
 language has accordingly several words  
 which express this hoping, forward-  
 looking attitude.

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## PSALM XXXIV.

THIS is, like the last, a Psalm in which God's providence and moral government of the world are the subject of grateful acknowledgement. His guardian care of the righteous is more especially celebrated and applied to the individual circumstances of the Psalmist.

This is one of the alphabetical Psalms, on which see the Introduction to Psalm xxv. The order of the Hebrew alphabet is preserved, except that there is no verse beginning with the letter Vau. The number of verses, however, is made to correspond with the number of letters in the alphabet, notwithstanding this omission, by means of

a verse added at the end, which begins (as is also the case in Psalm xxv.) with the word "redeem."

No value can be attached to the superscription with its historical reference, because, while it is borrowed from I Sam. xxi. 14, Abimelech is substituted for Achish, which looks like a confusion with the narrative in Gen. xx. xxi.; and further, the contents of the Psalm do not very readily, or naturally, harmonize with the supposed circumstances.

The contents of the Psalm may generally be distributed into pairs of verses. But the alphabetical order of course precludes anything like very close connection. The principal thought of the Psalm is God's care of the afflicted, and this appears repeated in different forms.

The closest connection is between ver. 12—15, which contain one consecutive piece of instruction.\*

[(A PSALM) OF DAVID, WHEN HE CHANGED HIS BEHAVIOUR BEFORE ABIMELECH; AND HE WAS DRIVEN AWAY, AND HE DEPARTED.]

- (Aleph) 1 I WILL bless Jehovah at all times,  
Continually shall His praise be in my mouth.
- (Beth) 2 In Jehovah shall my soul make her boast :  
The afflicted shall hear thereof and be glad.
- (Gimel) 3 O magnify Jehovah with me,  
And let us exalt His name together.
- (Daleth) 4 I sought Jehovah, and He answered me,  
And He delivered me out of all my terrors.
- (He) 5 They looked unto Him, and were lightened ;

5. 'THEY LOOKED, viz. "the afflicted," mentioned in ver. 2 ; or it may only mean generally "men looked ;" others, *i.e.* besides myself,

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\* "*May 25th*, 1603.—After a victory at sea, in which the Spanish commander Spinola was killed, the Dutch admiral, 'bald-headed weather-beaten Joost de Moor,' farther pursuit being impossible, piped all hands on deck, and officers and men fell on their knees, shouting in pious triumph the 34th Psalm, 'I will bless the Lord at all times. . . . O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.' So rang forth the notes of humble thanksgiving across the placid sea, and assuredly those hardy mariners, having gained a victory with their little vessels over twelve ships and 3,000 men—a numerical force of at least ten times their number—such as few but Dutchmen could have achieved, had a right to give thanks to Him from whom all blessings flow."—MOTLEY, *United Netherlands*, vol. iv.

- And may their faces not be ashamed.
- (Zain) 6 This afflicted man called, and Jehovah heard,  
And saved him out of all his troubles.
- (Cheth) 7 The Angel of Jehovah encampeth round about  
them that fear Him,  
And delivereth them.
- (Teth) 8 O taste and see that Jehovah is good !  
Blessed is the man that taketh refuge in  
Him.
- (Yod) 9 O fear Jehovah, ye His saints !  
For there is no want to them that fear Him.\*
- (Kaph) 10 Young lions have lacked and suffered hunger,  
But they that seek Jehovah shall not want  
any (good thing).
- (Lamed) 11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me,  
I will teach you the fear of Jehovah :
- (Mem) 12 What man is he that desireth life,  
That loveth (many) days that he may see  
good ?
- (Nun) 13 Keep thy tongue from evil,  
And thy lips from speaking guile ;
- (Samech) 14 Depart from evil and do good,  
Seek peace, and pursue it.
- (Ayin) 15 The eyes of Jehovah are towards the righteous,  
And His ears (are open) unto their cry.

have in like manner experienced God's loving-kindness.

WERE LIGHTENED, *i.e.* were bright with gladness because He heard them, reflecting as they were the Light of His countenance.

7. THE ANGEL. Not apparently here used of any particular angel, as "The Angel of the Covenant," or "the Captain of the Lord's host," but rather in a collective sense, "troops of angels."

8. O TASTE AND SEE. Comp. Heb. vi. 5, 1 Pet. ii. 3.

11. A form of address common in the Proverbs. See chapters i.—ix. Similar is the use of *τέκνα* by St. John in his Epistles.

13. On this taming of the tongue—of which so much is said in the proverbs of all nations—see xv. 2, 3, xxxix. 1—3, cxli. 3 ; Prov. iv. 24, xiii. 3, xxi. 23 ; St. James iii. 2 ff.

\* "There is no want to them that fear Him." This was St. Columba's last verse as he transcribed the Scriptures. These brought him to the foot of the page. "Here," said he, "I must stop; Baithune, write out the rest." A.D. 597.



- (Pe) 16 The face of Jehovah is against the evil-doers,  
To cut off the remembrance of them from  
the earth.
- (Tsaddi) 17 They cried, and Jehovah heard,  
And delivered them out of all their  
troubles.
- (Koph) 18 Jehovah is nigh unto them that are of a  
broken heart,  
And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
- (Resh) 19 Many are the sufferings of the righteous,  
But out of all of them doth Jehovah  
deliver him.
- (Shin) 20 He preserveth all his bones;  
Not one of them is broken.
- (Tau) 21 Evil shall slay the wicked,  
And they that hate the righteous shall be  
punished.
- (Pe) 22 Jehovah redeemeth the soul of His servants,  
And all they that trust in Him shall not  
be punished.

17. THEY, *i.e.* the righteous, mentioned ver. 15, and again ver. 19.

22. BE PUNISHED. The Hebrew verb means to *incur guilt*, and then, by a natural transition, to *suffer* as guilty. Hence in the Hebrew, sin and chastisement, righteousness and the manifestation of that righteousness,

are inseparable. The reward and the punishment partake of the nature of the things (or persons) rewarded and punished; hence the same word means both guilt and punishment. Akin to this is the well-known use of the word *sin*, for *sin-offering*.

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## PSALM XXXV.

THIS Psalm, if it be, as the inscription tells us, a Psalm of David, must have been composed either during his persecution by Saul, or during the revolt of Absalom. It is usual to connect it with his words in 1 Sam. xxiv. 15, "Jehovah therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause (the same expression as in ver. 1 of the Psalm), and deliver me by His judgement

out of thine hand." Its peculiar feature is that the enemies on whom the Poet imprecates the righteous judgements of God, are men who had formerly been his friends, men for whom he had prayed in their sorrow "with a brother's heart," and who now requited his love with ungrateful hatred. Such an enemy Saul may have been; but we never find any trace of bitterness in David's feelings towards Saul. The generous enemy whose heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt, and who always recognized in Saul the Lord's Anointed, would never have called down the judgements of God upon his head. It seems to me, therefore, more probable that the aiders and abettors of Absalom's conspiracy, men like Ahithophel and his associates, are aimed at in the Poet's burning words. But all this, and even the authorship itself, must be matter of mere conjecture.

The Psalm falls into three principal divisions; each of which closes with a thanksgiving.

I. Ver. 1—10. 1. Cry to God to come forth as a champion armed for his defence (1—3).

2. Prayer for the confusion and destruction of his enemies (4—8).

3. Thankful acknowledgement of God's deliverance (9, 10).

II. Ver. 11—18. 1. Contrast between the love and good-will which he had shown to his enemies, and the bitter hatred with which they had requited him (11—16).

2. Appeal to God against them, with vows of thanksgiving (17, 18).

III. Ver. 19—28. 1. Prayer that they may not triumph, with description of their craft and wickedness (19—21).

2. Again a prayer that God would appear to vindicate his cause and put them to confusion (22—26).

3. The joy of all the righteous and of the singer, because God executeth judgement upon the ungodly (27, 28).

[(A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

I. 1. **CONTEND, O Jehovah, with them that contend with me ;  
Fight Thou against them that fight against me.**

2. Lay hold of shield and buckler,

2. An amplification of the figure occurring already in the Pentateuch, where God is spoken of as a man of war, Exod. xv. 3, Deut. xxxii. 41. The bold anthropomorphic working out of the figure is, however, remark-

able. It shows the earnest desire in the Poet's mind to realize the fact that God not only taught his fingers to fight, but mixed in the battle, fighting as it were by his side, and assuring him of victory.

And arise as my helper.

3 Draw out also the spear and battle-axe

Against them that pursue me ;

Say unto my soul, "I am thy salvation."

4 Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after  
my soul :

Let them be turned back and brought to confusion  
that devise my hurt.

5 Let them be as the chaff before the wind,

And the angel of Jehovah scattering (them).

6 Let their way be darkness and exceeding slipperiness,

And the angel of Jehovah pursuing them.

7 For without cause have they hid for me a pit with  
their net ;

Without cause have they digged a pit for my soul.

8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares,

And let his net that he hath hid catch himself ;

Into that very destruction let him fall.

9 So shall my soul exult in Jehovah,

It shall be joyful in His salvation.

10 All my bones shall say,

"Jehovah, who is like unto Thee ?

Who deliverest the afflicted from him that is too  
strong for him,

Yea the afflicted and the poor from him that  
spoilcth him."

II. 11 Violent witnesses rise up,

They ask of me things that I know not,

4. LET THEM BE TURNED BACK. Very similar words occur ver. 26. Cf. also xl. 14, and lxx. 2, 3.

5. AS THE CHAFF. See i. 4, and comp. xviii. 42, lxxxiii. 13.

THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH : here perhaps, as in the last Psalm, not to be understood of any particular angel. Delitzsch supposes the Angel of Israel

to be meant, "who took off Pharaoh's chariot wheels, so that they drave them heavily."

7. A common metaphor borrowed from the artifices employed for taking wild beasts.

11. VIOLENT, *i.e.* unscrupulous witnesses.

- 12 They reward me evil for good :  
     My soul is bereaved.
- 13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing  
     was sackcloth ;  
     I humbled my soul with fasting,  
     And my prayer—may it return into my own bosom.
- 14 As though it had been my friend, my brother, so  
     did I behave myself ;  
     As one who sorroweth for a mother, I bowed  
     down mourning.
- 15 But when I halted, they rejoiced and gathered  
     themselves together,  
     They gathered themselves together, smiting (me)  
     when I knew it not.  
     They did tear (me) and ceased not ;
- 16 With them that are profane in their outlandish  
     mouthings,  
     Gnashing upon me with their teeth.
- 17 O Lord, how long wilt Thou see (this) ?  
     Bring back my soul from their destructions,  
     My only one from the lions.
- 18 I will give Thee thanks in the great congregation,  
     I will praise Thee among much people.

13. AND MY PRAYER, &c. The prayer I offered for them is a prayer I might have offered for myself. So true a prayer was it, so full of love, that I could wish nothing more than that the blessings I asked for them should be vouchsafed to me. This agrees, too, with what follows, "As though for my friend or my brother," &c. It may perhaps be illustrated by reference to Matt. x. 13, Luke x. 6; or the rendering may be as in the E. V., "My prayer returned into my own bosom," which is supposed to denote the posture of prayer, the head being bowed on the breast.

14. MOURNING, *i.e.* with all the outward signs of sorrow, especially the garments (as the word particularly denotes), perhaps also the untrimmed beard, unwashed face, &c., which were tokens of Oriental mourning. Comp. xxxviii. 6, Job i. 20, v. 11, &c.

15, 16. The cruel requital of all this affection and sympathy.

17. MY ONLY ONE. See note on xxii. 20.

18. CONGREGATION, or "assembly," or "church," the Greek equivalent being *ἐκκλησία*.

- III. 19 Let not them that are mine enemies falsely rejoice  
over me,  
Neither let them that hate me without a cause  
wink with the eye.
- 20 For not peace do they speak,  
But against them that are quiet in the land they  
devise words of deceit.
- 21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me ;  
They said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen (it).
- 22 Thou hast seen, O Jehovah : keep not silence ;  
O Lord, be not far from me.
- 23 Arouse Thyself and awake to my judgement,  
My God and my Lord, to my cause.
- 24 Judge me according to Thy righteousness, O  
Jehovah my God,  
And let them not rejoice over me.
- 25 Let them not say in their heart, 'Aha, so would  
we have it ;'  
Let them not say, 'We have swallowed him up.'

22. THOU HAST SEEN, with reference to the "our eye HATH SEEN" in the preceding verse.

This latter part of the Psalm is on the whole calmer than the former, as if the spirit had found rest in pouring out its complaints. Though the singer again calls for confusion on his enemies, the expressions are not so apparently vindictive as at the beginning of the Psalm. Comp. ver. 25, 26, with ver. 4—6.

But how are we to account for such prayers for vengeance at all? We find them chiefly in four Psalms, the 7th, 35th, 69th, and 109th, and the imprecations in these form a terrible climax. In the last, no less than thirty anathemas have been counted. Are these the mere outbursts of passionate and unsanctified feeling, or are they the legitimate expression of

a righteous indignation? Are they to be excused as being animated by the "spirit of Elias," a spirit not unholy indeed, but far removed from the meekness and gentleness of Christ; or are they stereotyped forms in which the spirit of Christian devotion may utter itself? Are they Jewish only, or may they be Christian also? An uninstructed fastidiousness, it is well known, has made many persons recoil from reading these Psalms at all. Many have found their lips falter when they have been called to join in using them in the congregation, and have either uttered them with bated breath and doubting heart, or have interpreted them in a sense widely at variance with the letter. Some have tried to reconcile them with a more enlightened conscience, by regarding such words not as the expression of a

- 26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion  
together,  
That rejoice at my hurt ;  
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour  
That magnify themselves against me.
- 27 Let them shout for joy and be glad  
Who have pleasure in my righteousness,  
And let them say alway, Jehovah be magnified,  
Who hath pleasure in the prosperity of His  
servants.

wish, but as the utterance of a prediction ; but the Hebrew optative, which is distinct enough from the simple future, absolutely forbids this expedient. Others again would see in them expressions which may lawfully be used in the soul's wrestling against spiritual enemies. And finally, some would defend them as utterances of righteous zeal for God's honour, and remind us that if we do not sympathise with such zeal, it may be not because our religion is more pure, but because our hearts are colder.

Now the real source of the difficulty lies in our not observing and bearing in mind the essential difference between the Old Testament and the New. The older dispensation was in every sense a sterner one than the new. The spirit of Elias, though not an evil spirit, was not the spirit of Christ. (Luke ix. 55.) "The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." And through Him His disciples are made partakers of the same spirit. But this was not the spirit of the older economy. The Jewish nation had been trained in a sterner school. It had been steeled and hardened by the discipline which had pledged it to a war of extermination with idolaters, and, however necessary such a discipline might be, it would not tend to foster the gentler virtues ; it is conceivable how even a

righteous man, under it, feeling it to be his bounden duty to root out evil wherever he saw it, and identifying, as he did, his own enemies with the enemies of Jehovah, might use language which to us appears unnecessarily vindictive. To men so trained and taught, what we call "religious toleration" was a thing not only wrong but absolutely inconceivable.

It may be quite true that we find revenge forbidden as directly in the Old Testament as in the New, as, for instance, in Lev. xix. 18, "Thou shalt not avenge," &c., though even there there is a limitation, "against the children of thy people." And it may be no less true that we find instances of imprecation in the New, as when St. Paul says (2 Tim. iv. 14). "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works ;" or when he exclaims, Acts xxiii. 3, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," or, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. xvi. 22). But even these expressions are very different from the varied, deliberate, carefully constructed, detailed anathemas of the Psalms. And our Lord's denunciations, to which Hengstenberg refers, are in no way parallel. They are not curses upon individuals, but in fact solemn utterances of the great truth, "Except

28 So shall my tongue talk of Thy righteousness,  
Of Thy praise all the day long.

“yerepent, ye shall all likewise perish.” But after all, whatever may be said of particular passages, the general tone which runs through the two covenants is unquestionably different. To deny this is not to honour Moses, but to dishonour Christ. (St. Matt. v. 43, xix. 8.) On the other hand, we must not forget that these imprecations are not the passionate longing for personal revenge. The singer undoubtedly sees in his enemies the enemies of God and His Church. They that are not with him are against God. And because the zeal of God’s house even consumes him, he prays that all the doers of iniquity may be rooted out. The indignation therefore is righteous, though it may appear to us wrongly directed, or excessive in its utterance.

Once more, the very fact that a dark cloud hid God’s judgement in the world to come from the view of the Old Testament saints, may be

alleged in excuse of this their desire to see Him take vengeance on His enemies here. How deeply the problem of God’s righteousness exercised their minds, is abundantly evident from numerous places in the Psalms. They longed to see that righteousness manifested. It could be manifested, they thought, only in the evident exaltation of the righteous, and the evident destruction of the wicked here. Hence, with their eye always fixed on temporal recompense, they could even wish and pray for the destruction of the ungodly. The awful things of the world to come were to a great extent hid from their eyes. Could they have seen these, then surely their prayer would have been, not “Let the angel of the Lord persecute them,” “Blot them out of Thy book;” but rather with Him who hung on the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

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## PSALM XXXVI.

THE Psalm is not so distinct in its features that we can assign it to any particular occasion in the life of David, or associate it with any definite period of Jewish history.

The Psalm opens with a striking picture of what a wicked man is who abandons himself, without check or remorse, to the inspirations of his own evil heart. Ver. 1—4.

Next, as if oppressed and terrified with the picture which he has

drawn of secure and thoughtful wickedness, the holy Psalmist turns with a quick revulsion of feeling to Him whose Love and Truth are at all times a sure defence. Here he pours out all the fulness of his heart. Words seem to fail him as there rise before him, in all their length and breadth, the loving-kindness, the faithfulness, the righteousness of Jehovah. Ver. 5—9.

Lastly, with his heart full of what God is, he prays that God would show His loving-kindness and His righteousness to those who, like himself, were upright in heart, and defeat the designs of the wicked. He concludes with the confident acknowledgement that his prayer has been heard. Ver. 10—12.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. (A PSALM) OF DAVID, THE SERVANT OF  
JEHOVAH.]

- 1 THE wicked hath an oracle of transgression in his heart,  
There is no fear of God before his eyes.
- 2 For he flattereth him in his eyes,  
To find out his iniquity, (and) to hate (it).
- 3 The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit ;  
He hath left off to behave wisely (and) to do good.
- 4 Wickedness doth he devise upon his bed,  
He setteth himself in a way that is not good,  
He abhorreth not evil.

1. ORACLE. Properly a divine utterance here used in the opposite sense of the source and fountain of evil in a wicked man's heart, inspiring and prompting him to do evil.

IN HIS HEART. This is in accordance with the reading of the Septuagint. The Hebrew text has "in my heart:" if we keep this, we must explain, "that which transgression says to the wicked is in my heart," *i.e.* is the subject of my thoughts.

Ver. 1—4 describe generally the character of the ungodly: first, the sin of his heart (ver. 1, 2); then the sin of his lips (ver. 3); lastly, the sin

of his hands, the evil schemes which he devises and executes (ver. 4).

As there is a climax in the whole description of the evil man, so especially is there a progress from bad to worse in ver. 3, 4. (1) He hath *left off* to do good; (2) on his bed he *meditates* evil (iv. 4, Micah ii. 1); (3) he resolutely *sets himself* to do evil; (4) his very conscience is hardened, so that he does evil without repugnance or misgiving.

4. HE ABHORRETH NOT, *i.e.* is far enough from rejecting any instrument, however sinful, for attaining his purposes.



- 5 O Jehovah, as the heavens is Thy loving-kindness,  
 Thy faithfulness (reacheth) unto the clouds :  
 6 Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God,  
 Thy judgements are a great deep.  
 Man and beast dost Thou preserve, O Jehovah.  
 7 How precious is Thy loving-kindness, O God !  
 And the children of men in the shadow of Thy  
 wings find refuge :

5—9. The transition from this description of the wicked to the praise of God's goodness and faithfulness, is certainly very abrupt ; yet may we not account for the abruptness here by a very natural recoil of feeling? No good man can ever delight to pourtray the workings of a heart alienated from God. If the evil he sees around him force him for a time to trace it to its hidden source, or watch its outward development, with the more joy and thankfulness will he find refuge (see ver. 7) from its hideous shadow in the faithfulness and goodness of God.

5. He seems as if words failed him when he would speak of the loving-kindness, the faithfulness, the righteousness of God. (See the same attributes associated in like manner in xxxiii. 4, 5, and there also in connection with God's providential care of His creatures.) The universe itself is too little to set forth their greatness. (Comp. ciii. 11 ; Eph. iii. 18.)

6. MOUNTAINS OF GOD (so "cedars of God," lxxx. 10) . . . A GREAT DEEP (cf. Rom. xi. 33) :—the mightiest things in creation, whether in the height above, or in the depth beneath. Not, however, are "mountains of God" to be considered as only="highest mountains : " but, like "the trees of Jehovah," civ. 16, which are explained as "the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted" (comp. Numb.

xxiv. 6) ; and "the river of God," lxxv. 9, *i.e.* the rain which He sends down upon earth ; so here the mountains are spoken of as the work of His hand. So too in Gen. xiii. 10, "the garden of Jehovah" is not merely "a very fair garden," but the garden of Eden which He Himself planted.

7. The remembrance of God's goodness, faithfulness, and righteousness, and His care both of man and beast, makes the singer to burst forth in holy ecstasy : "How precious is Thy loving-kindness, O God !" This preciousness (comp. cxxxix. 17) is then further enlarged upon. God is viewed as the gracious Host who provides for all who come to His house and His table. See the same figure, xxiii. 5, xxxiv. 9. Here the *loving-kindness* of God is the great subject of praise, because in this His *faithfulness* (in fulfilling His promises) and His *righteousness* manifested in rewarding the righteous (as well as in the punishment of the wicked) may be included. In the same way when St. John says, "God is Love," it is because Love in fact embraces and implies all other of the Divine attributes.

CHILDREN OF MEN, purposely the most general expression that could be employed, every one who feels his weakness and his sinfulness, and with that feeling seeks refuge in God.

SHADOW OF THY WINGS. See on xviii. 8.

- 8 They are abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house,  
 And Thou makest them drink of the brook of Thy pleasures ;
- 9 For with Thee is the Fountain of Life :  
 In Thy Light do we see Light.
- 10 O continue Thy loving-kindness to them that know Thee,  
 And Thy righteousness to the upright in heart.
- 11 Let not the foot of pride come against me,  
 Neither let the hand of the wicked drive me away.
- 12 There have the workers of iniquity fallen ;  
 They are thrust down, and are not able to rise.

8. FATNESS OF THY HOUSE, *i.e.* generally the rich provision made (comp. Job. xxxvi. 16, and Ps. xxiii. 5).

9. These are some of the most wonderful words in the Old Testament. Their fulness of meaning no commentary can ever exhaust. They are, in fact, the kernel and the anticipation of much of the profoundest teaching of St. John.

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE, *i.e.* of all life, both animal and spiritual. God only has Life in Himself, Life underived, as our Lord says, John v. 26.

IN THY LIGHT. Comp. Dan. ii. 22, "The light dwelleth with Him ;" and 1 John i. 5—7. Out of God all

is darkness. The creature is darkness, our own hearts and consciences are darkness, our duties are darkness, our deeds are darkness (John iii. 19, 20) ; the very order and constitution of the world, yea the word of God itself, except as seen in His Light, is darkness.

10. LOVING-KINDNESS. For the third time he dwells on this attribute of God, and again associates it, as in ver. 5, 6, with the "righteousness" of God.

12. THERE, pointing as it were to the scene. The field on which God's righteous judgement has been manifested in the overthrow of the wicked is before his eyes.

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## PSALM XXXVII.

A PSALM wherein the righteousness of God's providence is vindicated in His administration of the world. The Psalmist's own heart had no doubt at one time been shaken by the apparent successes and

triumphs of the ungodly, for it is a common temptation to distrust God when we see "the ungodly in great prosperity." The advice which the Psalmist gives is "to wait," "to trust in the Lord," to look at the end, and to observe how even in this life God manifests His righteousness, in rewarding the godly and punishing the wicked. This sentiment is repeated in various forms, and with much beauty of expression. The Psalm has something of a proverbial character about it, owing no doubt in some measure to the fact that the writer chose to fetter himself by an acrostical arrangement : for this is one of the Alphabetical Psalms, like Psalms xxv. and xxxiv.

## [A (PSALM) OF DAVID.]

- (Aleph) 1 FRET not thyself because of the evil-doers,  
Be not envious because of the workers of iniquity.  
2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,  
And as the green herb shall they wither.
- (Beth) 3 Trust thou in Jehovah, and do good ;  
Dwell in the land, and enjoy safety.  
4 Delight thyself also in Jehovah,  
And He shall give thee the petitions of thy heart.
- (Gimel) 5 Cast thy way on Jehovah,  
And trust in Him ; and He shall bring (it) to pass.  
6 Yea He will bring forth thy righteousness as the light,  
And thy judgement as the noon-day.
- (Daleth) 7 Rest in Jehovah, and wait patiently for Him ;

1. The whole verse is to be found almost word for word, Prov. xxiv. 19 ; the latter part of it also, Prov. iii. 31, xxiii. 17, xxiv. 1. Comp. lxxiii. 3.

3. Trust in God is the true antidote for the fretfulness and envy which are before forbidden.

DWELL IN THE LAND—for the promises to Israel, and Israel's glory as a nation, were bound up with the Land.

4. DELIGHT THYSELF in Him, and so thou wilt choose and love that which He chooses and loves ; therefore He will give thee thy heart's desires.

5. CAST THY WAY. Cf. xxii. 8. 1 Peter, v. 7.

6. HE WILL BRING FORTH, *sc.* like the sun going forth in the morning. Cf. Jer. li. 10.

7. REST IN JEHOVAH, *lit.* Be silent, be still for Him ; a word expressive

- Fret not thyself because of him who  
prospereth in his way,  
Because of the man who bringeth wicked  
devices to pass.
- (He) 8 Cease from anger, and let go wrath ;  
Fret not thyself, only to do evil.
- 9 For evil doers shall be cut off ;  
But those that hope for Jehovah, *they* shall  
inherit the land.
- (Vau) 10 Yea, yet but a little while and the wicked is not,  
And thou shalt diligently consider his place  
and he is no more.
- 11 But the meek shall inherit the land,  
And shall delight themselves in the abund-  
ance of peace.
- (Zain) 12 The wicked deviseth evil against the righteous,  
And gnasheth upon him with his teeth.
- 13 The Lord laugheth at him,  
For He hath seen that his day is coming.
- (Cheth) 14 The wicked have drawn the sword,  
They have also bent their bow,  
That they may cast down the afflicted and the  
poor,  
That they may slay them that are upright in  
the way.
- 15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart,  
And their bows shall be broken.

of that calm resignation which leaves itself absolutely in the hands of God. Perhaps the Prayer-book Vers. comes nearer, "*Hold thee still in the Lord.*" This hushed, bowed temper of spirit best befits us. Here is the best cure for dissatisfaction with the present and for anxiety about the future, that we leave both in the hands of God. Here is our highest wisdom even for the life of our spirits, that we stay ourselves not upon outward acts or

inward impulses, but on Him who worketh in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

8. ONLY TO DO EVIL, *i.e.* nothing but evil can come of it.

11. THE MEEK. See on ix. 12.

THE LAND. Cf. xxv. 13, and Matt. v. 5, where, however, the range is wider, "*shall inherit the earth.*"

13. LAUGHETH, cf. ii. 4.

HIS DAY, cf. cxxxvii. 7 ; Job xviii. 20 ; Jer. l. 27, 31 ; Obad. 12.

- (Teth) 16 Better is a little that the righteous man hath,  
 Than the riches of many wicked.  
 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,  
 But Jehovah upholdeth the righteous.
- (Yod) 18 Jehovah knoweth the days of the perfect,  
 And their inheritance shall be for ever.  
 19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time,  
 And in the days of famine they shall be  
 satisfied.
- (Kaph) 20 But the wicked shall perish,  
 And the enemies of Jehovah be as the glory  
 of the pastures :  
 They consume—in smoke they consume away.
- (Lamed) 21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again ;  
 But the righteous is bountiful, and giveth.  
 22 For they that are blessed of Him shall inherit  
 the land ;  
 And they that are cursed of Him shall be  
 cut off.
- (Mem) 23 From Jehovah (is it) that a man's steps are  
 established,  
 So that He hath pleasure in his way.  
 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast  
 down,  
 For Jehovah upholdeth his hand.
- (Nun) 25 I have been young, and (now) am old ;  
 Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,

16. See a similar sentiment, Prov. xv. 16.

18. KNOWETH THE DAYS, *i.e.* watcheth over, careth for, lovingly orders all that befalls them.

20. THE GLORY OF THE PASTURES, or MEADOWS (*not* of the flocks, cf. lxx. 13, Is. xxx. 23), *i.e.* the grass and flowers.

21, 22. The blessing and the curse of God, as seen in the different lots of the righteous and the wicked. The wicked, through God's curse resting on him, is reduced to poverty, so that

he is compelled to borrow, and cannot pay ; whereas the righteous hath even abundance not only for his own wants, but for the wants of others. It is the promise, Deut. xv. 6, xxviii. 12, 44, turned into a proverb.

23. He that would walk securely, and so as to please the Lord, must trust in the Lord to guide him. (Cf. Prov. xx. 24, and xvi. 9.) The sentiment is put in a general form, but the righteous man, as he appears in the Psalm, is meant, as is clear from the next verse.

- Nor his seed begging bread.  
 26 All the day long is he gracious and lendeth,  
 And his seed is blessed.  
 (Samech) 27 Depart from evil, and do good ;  
 And (so shalt thou) dwell for evermore.  
 28 For Jehovah loveth judgement,  
 And forsaketh not His beloved.  
 (Ayin) For ever they are preserved ;  
 But the seed of the wicked is cut off.  
 29 The righteous shall inherit the land,  
 And dwell therein for ever.  
 (Pe) 30 The mouth of the righteous talketh of  
 wisdom,  
 And his tongue speaketh judgement.  
 31 The Law of his God is in his heart :  
 None of his steps shall slide.  
 (Tsaddi) 32 The wicked lieth in wait for the righteous,  
 And seeketh (occasion) to slay him.  
 33 Jehovah will not leave him in his hand,  
 Nor condemn him when he is judged.  
 (Koph) 34 Wait on Jehovah, and keep His way,  
 So shall He exalt thee to inherit the land :  
 When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt  
 see (it).  
 (Resh) 35 I have seen a wicked man full of violence,  
 And spreading himself like a green tree in  
 its native soil ;

26. See above, ver. 21, and comp. cxii. 5. The promise in Deut., quoted on ver. 21. no doubt it was which made this characteristic of *lending* so prominent.

31. The Law within is the guiding principle which directs his steps.

33. Men may condemn, but God acquits. Here, as in 1 Cor. iv. 3, the righteous judgement of the Great Judge is opposed to the *ἀνακρινεῖν* of human judgement (*ἡμέρα*).

34. WAIT ON JEHOVAH. Keep

thine eye fixed on Him (cf. ἀποβλέπειν, Heb. xii. 2) despite the prosperity of the wicked, and the persecutions which thou sufferest.

THOU SHALT SEE IT, or thou shalt look upon it with satisfaction.

35. A TREE IN ITS NATIVE SOIL, (one word in Hebrew), or "a tree growing in its native soil," one that has never been transplanted or disturbed, that has therefore struck its roots deep, and shot out with luxuriant strength.

36 Yet he passed away, and lo he was not :  
 Yea, when I sought him he could not be  
 found.

(Shin) 37 Observe the perfect (man), see the upright,  
 That the man of peace hath a posterity ;  
 38 But the transgressors are destroyed together ;  
 The posterity of the wicked is cut off.

(Tau) 39 The salvation of the righteous is of Jehovah,  
 Their fortress in the time of trouble.  
 40 Yea, Jehovah helpeth them and rescueth them,  
 He rescueth them from the wicked, and  
 saveth them,  
 Because they have found refuge in Him.

37. HATH A POSTERITY. As opposed to the wicked in the next clause whose posterity is cut off. Then it would be—"Thou shalt see thy children's children and peace upon Israel." Or instead of "posterity"

the word may mean "the future," the end that yet awaits him.

40. He *delivereth* them : because they *trust* in Him. The whole lesson of the Psalm lies in these words.

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## PSALM XXXVIII.

THIS Psalm tells the story of a bitter suffering. The suffering is both in body and in mind. The body is wasted by a cruel and loathsome disease, and the mind is full of anguish, arising partly from a deep sense of sin, and partly from the fear of relentless and now rejoicing enemies. Body and mind, in such circumstances, act and react upon one another. Mental anguish impairs the strength of the body ; and bodily suffering and weakness make us less able to face with steady and resolute courage the horrors which crowd upon the mind.

Deserted even of his friends, consumed by a burning fever, with beating heart and failing eyes, the sufferer describes himself as "benumbed and sore broken" with his misery. Suffering seems here to have reached its height. But out of the very midst of the furnace

the sufferer can say, "Lord, before Thee is all my desire—in Thee, O Jehovah, have I hoped;" can cry with all the earnestness of a faith purified by affliction, "Leave me not, be not far from me, O Lord, my Salvation."

The Psalm may be said to consist of three principal parts, each of which opens with an address to God. Each of these contains an appeal to God's mercy—each rests it on different grounds.

The first of these is based on the *greatness* of the suffering. Ver. 1—8.

The second on the *patience* of the sufferer, as well as on the suffering. Ver. 9—14.

The third on the *fear* lest, through his fate, wicked men should have an occasion of triumph. Ver. 15—22.

[A PSALM OF DAVID. TO BRING TO REMEMBRANCE.]

- 1 O JEHOVAH, in Thy wrath rebuke me not,  
Neither in Thy hot displeasure chasten me.
- 2 For Thine arrows stick fast in me,  
And Thy hand presseth me sore.
- 3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine  
indignation ;  
There is no health in my bones because of my sin.
- 4 For mine iniquities have passed over my head ;  
Like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.

1. See note on vi. 1, where very nearly the same words occur. Most of what has been said on that Psalm is applicable here, and need not be repeated.

2. There is here, and in what follows, as Calvin observes, a tacit appeal to God's promises. Why is it that the saint of God thus sets forth all his sufferings, but because he knows that his God will not lay on him a punishment heavier than he can bear? It is not therefore merely as a complaint,

but as an appeal to the mercy of God, that he tells all his woe. There is a yet further appeal in the recognition of God's hand. "*Thine arrows . . . Thy hand.*" It is this conviction that God has inflicted the chastisement, that leads him to seek the remedy from the same source.

3. NO SOUNDNESS. Comp. Is. i. 6.

4. HAVE PASSED. A metaphor, as often, from waves passing over the head. Comp. xviii. 16, lxix. 2, 15.



- 5 My wounds stink, they are corrupt,  
Because of my foolishness,  
6 I am bent, I am bowed down sore,  
All the day long have I gone mourning ;  
7 For my loins are full of burning,  
And there is no soundness in my flesh.  
8 I am benumbed and sore broken,  
I have roared by reason of the unrest of my heart.
- 9 Lord, before Thee is all my desire,  
And my sighing is not hid from Thee.  
10 My heart pulseth quickly, my strength hath failed me,  
And the light of mine eyes—even that is gone from me.  
11 My friends and my companions stand aloof from my  
punishment,  
And my kinsmen have stood afar off.  
12 They also lay snares, that seek after my soul,  
And they that strive to do me evil speak mischievous  
things,  
And meditate deceits all the day long.

5. **FOOLISHNESS.** His sin, as seen now in its true light, showing itself to be folly, for all sin is self-destruction. This confession of his sin is, in fact, at the same time, a confession of the justice of his punishment.

6. **I AM BENT,** properly, as writhing with pain, as *Is.* xxi. 3.

**MOURNING.** See on xxxv. 14.

8. **I AM BENUMBED,** lit. I have become deadly cold, cold as a corpse ; possibly with reference to the burning inflammation in the previous verse ; as marking the alternations in the fever-fit.

9. The one gleam of comfort and refreshment in his misery ; the one bright ray which lights up the darkness ; the one thought which sustains him, that he may "unburden himself of all his griefs in the bosom of God." We have but to read the first fourteen

verses, without this verse, to see how much blacker the night of suffering grows.

11. Up to this point he has spoken of his suffering as arising from his own state both of body and mind. He describes now its aggravation from the conduct of others ; first of friends who deserted him, and next of enemies who plotted against him. And this aggravation of his misery is again a fresh argument with God,—an argument borrowed, as Calvin reminds us, from the word of God, and one intended for our use.

**MY PUNISHMENT,** lit. "my blow," a word always used of punishment as inflicted by God.

12. **MISCHIEVOUS THINGS,** lit. "a yawning gulf of destruction," as though they would swallow me up.

- 13 But as for me, as a deaf man, I could not hear,  
And (I was) as a dumb man that openeth not his  
mouth.
- 14 Yea, I became as a man that heareth not,  
And (as one) in whose mouth are no replies.
- 15 For in Thee, O Jehovah, have I hoped ;  
Thou wilt answer (for me), O Lord my God.
- 16 For I said,—Lest they rejoice over me,  
(Lest) when my foot is moved, they magnify them-  
selves against me ;
- 17 For as for me, I am ready to halt,  
And my smart is ever before me ;
- 18 For I must confess my iniquity,  
I must be sorry for my sin ;
- 19 And mine enemies are vigorous (and) strong,  
And they are many that hate me without cause ;
- 20 And requiting evil for good,  
They withstand me for my following that which is  
good.

14. NO REPLIES, not here “re-  
proofs” or “rebukes,” but answers,  
in self-vindication, to the calumnies  
of his enemies.

Calvin sees two reasons for this  
comparison of himself to a dumb  
man : first, that he was *compelled* by  
the injustice of his enemies to be  
silent ; they would not suffer him to  
speak : and next, his own patient  
submission to the will of God. But  
I think the last only is prominent  
here. It was not that David could  
not, but that he would not, answer.  
Comp. Rom. xii. 19. In this, he was  
the type of a greater Sufferer in a  
more august agony (Is. liii. 7 ; 1 Pet.  
ii. 23).

16. I SAID, *i.e.* within myself.

LEST, with the usual ellipsis of  
some verb, such as “I fear,” but  
again addressed as an argument to  
God ; the argument being, that His  
honour is concerned in upholding

His servant, lest the wicked should  
triumph. Therefore, too, he leaves it  
to God to answer, lest by answering  
himself he should give occasion to the  
enemy to blaspheme.

18. FOR. The conjunction recurs  
here for the fourth time in verses  
15—18. In ver. 15 David made no  
reply to his enemies, *for* God, he felt,  
would answer for him. Ver. 16, he  
would have God to answer for him,  
*for* he feared his enemies might have  
occasion to triumph “when his foot is  
moved.” In ver. 17 the *for* gives a  
further reason why this is probable—  
*viz.* his own weakness ; and in ver.  
18, with another *for*, he confesses his  
sin, which is the reason of his weak-  
ness, whilst his enemies are “vigorous  
and strong.”

21, 22. With this conclusion of the  
Psalm compare the similar expres-  
sions, xxii. 11, 19, xxxv. 22, xl. 13,  
&c.

- 21 Leave me not, O Jehovah ;  
     My God, be not far from me.  
 22 Haste (Thee) to help me,  
     O Lord, my Salvation.
- 

## PSALM XXXIX.

“THE most beautiful,” says Ewald, “of all elegies in the Psalter.” It is the sorrowful complaint of a heart, not yet subdued to a perfect resignation, but jealous with a godly jealousy, lest it should bring dishonour upon its God, and longing for light from Heaven to scatter its doubts. The holy singer had long pent up his feelings; and though busy thoughts were stirring within him, he would not give them utterance. He could not bare his bosom to the rude gaze of an unsympathizing world. And he feared lest, while telling his perplexities, some word might drop from his lips which would give the wicked an occasion to speak evil against his God. (This feeling is one the expression of which we have already had in the preceding Psalm.) And when at last, unable to repress his strong emotion, he speaks, it is to God and not to man. It is as one who feels how hopeless the problem of life is, except as seen in the light of God. It is with the deep conviction of personal frailty (ver. 6) and sinfulness (ver. 9), as well as of the frailty and sinfulness of all men. It is with the touching sadness of one who cannot be comforted. And yet the weeping eye is raised to heaven, and amidst all his grief and perplexity, notwithstanding all that is so dark and cheerless in the world, pilgrim and stranger as he is, the Psalmist can still say, “My hope is in Thee” (ver. 7).

The Psalm consists properly of two parts:—

I. A preface descriptive of the circumstances under which it was composed. Ver. 1—3.

II. The expression of the Psalmist’s feelings at the time. Ver 4—13.

This latter part, however, may be again subdivided into three sections, the first two of which close with the refrain and the *Selah*.

(1) A prayer to be taught rightly concerning the vanity of life. Ver. 4, 5.

(2) A confession of that vanity—a cleaving to God, and an acknowledgement that sin deserves chastisement. Ver. 6—11.

(3) A further prayer that God would hear him, and that because he is but a stranger, and his days few upon earth. Ver. 12, 13.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. FOR JEDUTHUN.\* A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 I SAID, Let me take heed to my ways,  
That I sin not with my tongue :  
Let me keep a bridle on my mouth,  
While the wicked is yet before me.
- 2 I remained dumb in silence ;  
I held my peace, and had no comfort,  
And my sorrow was stirred.
- 3 My heart was hot within me ;  
While I was musing a fire burned : *Jer 20 9*  
(Then) spake I with my tongue :
- 4 Make me know, O Jehovah, mine end,  
And the measure of my days what it is,  
That I may know how frail I am.

1. I SAID, *i.e.* I thought, I formed this resolution. (Comp. xxxviii. 16.) And the resolution was not to sin with his tongue. He feared lest his complaint should be misinterpreted as murmuring against God. But the sadness of his heart prevails against his resolution ; the more the feeling was checked, the more hotly it burned (comp. Jer. xx. 9), till at last it could be restrained no longer.

4. The words that he “spake with his tongue” are those which follow to

the end of the Psalm. The introduction is the record of that inward struggle out of which the Psalm itself arose. And the words that he does speak are directed to God in prayer for teaching, not to man in complaints.

But in what relation does the prayer which follows stand to the perplexity which gave birth to it? Why does he ask, MAKE ME KNOW MINE END? The train of thought seems to be this : “Make me rightly to know and esti-

\* See also inscriptions to Ps. lxii. and lxxvii. ; the name of one of David's three choir-masters. He is probably the same person as Ethan, 1 Chron. xv. 19. See General Introd. p. 8.

- 5 Behold, Thou hast made my days as hand-breadths,  
And my life-time is as nothing before Thee :  
Surely every man, at his best estate, is nothing but a  
breath. [Selah.]
- 6 Surely in a shadow doth a man walk to and fro ;  
Surely for a breath are they disquieted :  
He heapeth up (treasures), and knoweth not who shall  
gather them.
- 7 And now what have I waited for, O Lord ?  
My hope is in Thee.
- 8 From all my transgressions deliver me ;  
Make me not a reproach of the fool.
- 9 I was dumb,—I could not open my mouth ;  
Because Thou didst it.

mate the shortness and uncertainty of human life, that so, instead of suffering myself to be perplexed with all that I see around me, I may cast myself the more entirely upon Thee," as indeed follows, "And now, Lord, what wait I for?" The prayer in xc. 12 is somewhat similar, though it stands there in a different connection.

5. AT HIS BEST ESTATE, lit. "standing fast," *i.e.* however firmly established he may be.

A BREATH. Such is the literal meaning of the word. In xc. 9, a different word is used ; see note there.

6. With this verse, as is evident both from the refrain at the end of the last, and the Selah, a new strophe or division of the Psalm begins.

ARE THEY DISQUIETED, lit. "do they make a noise, or commotion." All the fret and stir, all the eager clamour and rivalry of men, as they elbow and jostle one another to obtain wealth and rank, and the enjoyments of life, are but a breath. (Comp. James iv. 13, 14, where, after describing the busy scene, the buyers and sellers thronging the market-place, and full of the thought of their trade and of their speculations for the year,

he solemnly asks, "For what is your life? For it is a vapour (*ἀτμός*), which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away.")

7. AND NOW : turning away, as it were, with a sense of relief from the sad contemplation of man's fleeting, transitory life, to fix the eye of his heart on Him who abideth ever. We seem almost to hear the deep sigh with which the words are uttered. It is remarkable that even here it is on God Himself, not on a life to come, that his hope sustains itself.

8. FROM ALL MY TRANSGRESSIONS. He now strikes at once at the root of all his sufferings and all his perplexities.

MAKE ME NOT A REPROACH—said, it would seem, with reference to the temptation which had assailed him before, to give utterance to his disquietude even in the presence of the ungodly. But the connection is difficult, and it may only mean, "Do not so chasten me that fools may rejoice at my suffering."

9. I WAS DUMB. This clearly refers to the resolve and conduct described in ver. 1, 2. It does not introduce the expression of a fresh resolve, as many have supposed.

10 Turn aside from me Thy stroke.

I am (even) consumed by the blow of Thine hand.

11 (When) with rebukes for iniquity Thou hast chastened  
a man,

Thou makest his beauty melt away like the moth.

Surely every man (is but) a breath. [Selah.]

12 Hear my prayer, O Jehovah,

And give ear unto my cry ;

At my weeping be not silent :

For I am a stranger with Thee,

A sojourner, as all my fathers (were).

13 Look away from me, that I may recover strength,

Before I go hence, and be no more.

I COULD NOT OPEN ; or simply as a subordinate clause to the preceding, "without opening my mouth." He thus reiterates before God how careful he had been to avoid giving offence by any hasty word ; alleges the reason for this, because he felt that his suffering was God's doing ; and urges it as a motive with God in the entreaty which follows.

10. BLOW, lit. "attack ;" the word only occurs here—parallel with STROKE, which precedes. For this first word, see on xxxviii. 11. The pron. "I" expressed is emphatic, and implies a tacit contrast between his own weakness and the power of God, whose hand was laid upon him.

11. This verse contains a further reason why God should take away His stroke.

LIKE THE MOTH, *i.e.* his beauty is frail and perishing. The P.B.V. "like the moth fretting a garment," compares the action of God in destroying man's beauty to the action of the moth upon the garment, but the comparison does not seem so appropriate. See also 1 Pet. ii. 11 and Gen. xxiii. 4.

12. The Psalm closes with a still more earnest appeal to God's pitying

mercy, based still on that very transitoriness of life which is the burden of the whole.

A STRANGER . . . A SOJOURNER. Comp. the confession of David, 1 Chron. xxix. 15, "For we are strangers with Thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers (were). As a shadow are our days upon the earth, and there is no hope (here)." A STRANGER, "one who is but a passing guest : " A SOJOURNER, "one who settles for a time in a country, but is not a native of it."

AS ALL MY FATHERS : as the patriarchs had been in the land which was theirs only by promise. He himself, he felt, and all men were on the earth what Abraham was in the land of promise : he could not call one foot of it his own. Comp. also Lev. xxv. 23.

13. The last verse is borrowed from Job vii. 19, x. 20, 21. See also Job vii. 8, ix. 25, xiv. 5.

LOOK AWAY, *i.e.* keep not Thine eye fixed upon me in anger : it answers to "Turn aside Thy stroke," in ver. 10.

THAT I MAY RECOVER STRENGTH, prop. applied to the countenance, "That I may become cheerful."

## PSALM XL.

THIS Psalm consists of two parts. The first (ver. 1—10) tells the story of God's mercies in a former time of trouble ; the second (ver. 11—17) is a cry for the like help and deliverance, now that fresh calamities are come. The writer, looking back to the past, tells how he had been brought into the deepest abyss of misery ; he had been like one falling into a pit, or sinking in a deep morass, where there was no resting-place for his feet ; but God of His great mercy had heard him when he cried, had delivered him from his trouble, had set his feet on a rock, and established his goings (ver. 2) : and not only had He done this, but He had also given him a heart and a tongue to praise Him (ver. 3). Then follows the expression of his feelings at the time. Here, after speaking of the blessedness of trusting in Jehovah, and of the wonders of His goodness, not only to the singer himself, but to all Israel (comp. lxxiii. 1), he further declares what had been the great lesson of his affliction,—how he had learnt that there was a better sacrifice than that of bulls and goats, even the sacrifice of an obedient will ; and how, moreover, he had found that this truth which God had opened his ears to receive (ver. 6) was in most perfect harmony with the truth taught in the written law (ver. 7) ; and lastly, how, constrained by a sense of gratitude, he had published to "the great congregation" the loving-kindness and truth of the Lord.

In the second division of the Psalm, he pleads the past, and his own conduct in the past, as a ground for renewed mercies being vouchsafed to him, now that he is in fresh trouble, bowed down by the burden of his sins (ver. 9), and cruelly pursued by his enemies (ver. 14). Thrice he prays earnestly for himself (ver. 11, 13, 17) ; the last time, faith having vanquished in the struggle, there mingles with the cry for help the touching expression of confidence in God : "But as for me, miserable and helpless though I be, the Lord thinketh upon me." With these personal petitions are joined others against the malice of his enemies (14, 15), and intercession on behalf of all those who, like himself, love and seek Jehovah.

This second part, or rather the portion of it from ver. 13 to ver. 17.

appears again, in an independent form, as Psalm lxx. But it is, I think, almost certain, that the Psalm in its present form is the original, and the latter verses were subsequently detached and slightly altered, in order to form a distinct poem.

Whether David was the author of this Psalm is a question which we can hardly hope now to decide. There are expressions in it not unlike those which we find in Psalms unquestionably his: but we cannot pretend to point to any circumstances in his life to which it undoubtedly refers.

With regard to the predictive character of the Psalm, and the reference of one portion of it in the Epistle to the Hebrews to Christ, something will be found on that subject in the note on ver. 6. The great principle of a *typical* predictiveness in all Jewish history is the most satisfactory principle of interpretation in this and in all similar cases.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 TRULY I had waited upon Jehovah,  
And He inclined unto me, and heard my cry ;
- 2 And He brought me up out of a pit of destruction,  
Out of a miry swamp,  
And set my feet upon a rock,  
(And) made my footsteps firm ;

1, 2. He tells how Jehovah had rewarded his trust by answering his prayer, and how He had rescued him from imminent destruction.

1. TRULY I HAD WAITED, or "I did indeed wait," as implying there was such a thing as an opposite temper of mind, and that this had been carefully avoided.

2. The deliverance. The metaphor of the pit may be used either with reference to a pitfall for wild beasts, as vii. 15, or a dungeon, such as that into which Jeremiah was cast (Jer. xxxviii. 6), and which

would often have a damp and miry bottom.

MIRY SWAMP, lit. "mire of mud," an almost pleonastic expression; comp. lxix. 2. The expressions are clearly metaphorical. This I mention, because some expositors have maintained that the Psalm was written by Jeremiah, and that the reference is to the literal pit, or dungeon, into which he was cast. If so, where, asks Maurer, was the rock on which his feet were placed?

MADE MY FOOTSTEPS FIRM, *i.e.* did not merely bring me into a place



- 3 And He put a new song in my mouth,  
 (Even) praise unto our God :—  
 Many shall see (it) and fear,  
 And shall put their trust in Jehovah :—
- 4 Blessed is the man who hath made Jehovah his trust,  
 And hath not turned to the proud, and to such as go  
 aside falsely.
- 5 Thou hast greatly multiplied, O Jehovah my God,  
 Thy wonders and Thy thoughts towards us :—  
 They cannot be set in order unto Thee :—  
 Would I declare them, and speak of them,  
 They are more than I can tell.
- 6 In sacrifice and offering Thou hast no delight,  
 —Mine ears hast Thou opened,—  
 Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not  
 required.

of safety and there leave me, but provided for my future security.

3. A NEW SONG, *i.e.* one celebrating with all the power of a recent gratitude a new and signal act of deliverance. The old forms, the customary expressions, the well-known hymns were not enough. See on xxxiii. 3.

4. HIS TRUST, *i.e.* object of trust, as lxxv. 5, Is. xx. 5, and elsewhere. This obviously is a continuation of the last clause of the preceding verse. "Many shall trust in Jehovah, and blessed are they who do so." The next verse again gives the reason for this trust, the manifold and marvelous deliverances which God had ever vouchsafed to Israel.

HATH NOT TURNED, a word used especially of apostasy from the true God to idols, as Lev. xix. 4, Deut. xxix. 18, Hos. iii. 1, and often.

5. THOU HAST GREATLY MULTIPLIED, &c. : lit. "many hast Thou made Thy wonders," &c.

6. He proceeds now to declare the

great truth which God had taught him, and which it would seem he had learnt in his affliction, that God desires the sacrifice of the will rather than the sacrifice of slain beasts.

We may perhaps paraphrase ver. 5—8 as follows : My heart is full to overflowing with the thought of Thy goodness. How can I express, how can I acknowledge it? Once I should have thought sacrifices and offerings a proper and sufficient acknowledgement. Now I feel how inadequate these are ; for Thou hast taught me the truth ; my deaf unwilling ears didst Thou open, that I might understand that a willing heart was the best offering I could render. Then, being thus taught of Thee, I said, Lo, I come, presenting myself before Thee, not with a dead and formal service, but with myself as a living sacrifice. The truth here inculcated is stated fully in Ps. i., and is often insisted on by the Prophets. Comp. 1 Sam. xv. 22 ; Ps. li. 16, lxxix. 30, 31 ; Is. i.

7 Then said I, "Lo, I come ;

—In the roll of the Book it is prescribed to me,—

8 To do Thy pleasure, O my God, I delight,

Yea, Thy Law is in my inmost heart."

9 I have published righteousness in (the) great congregation :

Lo, my lips I would not refrain,

O Jehovah, THOU knowest.

11 ; Jer. vii. 21, &c. ; Hos. vi. 6 ; Mic. vi. 6—8.

SACRIFICE, properly of slain beasts. OFFERING, *i.e.* the bloodless offering of fine flour, &c. BURNT-OFFERING, the object of which was to obtain the Divine favour ; whereas that of the SIN-OFFERING was to make propitiation. But the four are here mentioned only with a view to express in the largest way *all manner of sacrifices*.

MINE EARS HAST THOU OPENED, lit. "Ears hast thou dug (or pierced) for me ;" "given me open ears." There is certainly no allusion to the custom of nailing the ear of the slave to the door-post as a symbol of perpetual servitude and obedience (Exod. xxi. 6). For this a different Hebrew word is used ; only *one* ear was thus pierced ; and the allusion would be far-fetched and quite out of place here.

7. LO, I COME, *i.e.* to appear before Thee ; a phrase used to indicate the coming of an inferior into the presence of a superior, or of a slave before his master, Numb. xxii. 38, 2 Sam. xix. 20 : as in the similar expression "behold here I am,"—generally expressive of willingness.

IN THE ROLL OF THE BOOK. Another parenthetical clause, corresponding to the former, "Mine ears hast Thou opened," that which Thou hast taught me is that which

is contained in Thy law ; I find there the same truth which Thy Spirit hath already written on my heart. The BOOK is the Book of the Law of Moses. The ROLL shows that it was written upon parchment ; this is a word common enough in Jer. and Ezek.

IT IS PRESCRIBED TO ME, or laid upon me as a duty, exactly in the same sense as the words occur 2 Kings xxii. 13, where on the discovery of the Book of the Law, it is said, "Great is the wrath of Jehovah—because our fathers hearkened not to the words of this Book, to do according to all which is prescribed to us : " not as in E. V., "which is written *concerning* us," just as in this passage it has "it is written *of* me," in this following the interpretation of the LXX., *περὶ ἐμοῦ* ; an interpretation which is adopted in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

8. TO DO THY PLEASURE (or will). These words would seem naturally to depend on the foregoing, "Lo, I come," and so they are twice cited in Heb. x. 7, 9. Instead of that, however, a new verb is supplied, "I delight."

IN MY INMOST HEART (lit. "in the midst of my bowels," as the seat of the affections), written there on its "fleshy tables," and not merely in the Book. Comp. xxxvii. 31, Deut. vi. 6, and see the prophetic promises

- 10 I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart;  
 Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation have I uttered :  
 I have not concealed Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth  
 From (the) great congregation.
- 11 Thou, O Jehovah, wilt not refrain Thy tender compassions from me ;  
 Let Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth always defend me.
- 12 For evils have come about me without number ;  
 My iniquities have taken hold upon me that I cannot see :  
 They are more than the hairs of my head,  
 And my heart hath failed me.
- 13 Be pleased, O Jehovah, to deliver me ;  
 O Jehovah, to help me, make haste !

that so it should be with the whole nation (Jer. xxxi. 33, Is. li. 7).

9. But not obedience only, but thanksgiving also shall form a part of his grateful acknowledgement of God's goodness ; he will both do the will and speak the praises of Jehovah. This last, too, is better than sacrifice, l. 14, 15, 23

On the enumeration of the various attributes of God, see above, xxxvi. 5—7.

9, 10. I HAVE PUBLISHED . . . I WOULD NOT REFRAIN . . . I HAVE NOT HID . . . I HAVE UTTERED . . . I HAVE NOT CONCEALED : words are heaped upon words to express the eager forwardness of a heart burning to show forth its gratitude. No elaborate description could so well have given us the likeness of one whose "life was a thanksgiving."

11. The Psalmist turns to earnest entreaty. Apparently, therefore, he has recalled a former deliverance, in order to comfort himself therewith in his present sorrow, and pleads his conduct in the past as a ground for fresh mercies. THOU WILT NOT REFRAIN, with evident reference to the

I WOULD NOT REFRAIN, ver. 9. Again, THY LOVING-KINDNESS AND THY TRUTH, with like reference to the preceding verse, "As I have not concealed them from others, so let them ever defend me."

12. MY INIQUITIES. This verse is quite decisive as to the question which has been raised respecting the Messianic interpretation of the Psalm. It is quite impossible to refer such words as these to Christ ; and when expositors choose to say that "my iniquities" mean "the iniquities laid upon me," they are doing violence most unjustifiably to the plain words of the text. Such interpreters can hardly find fault with Romanists for adding to the Word of God.

13. From this verse to the end appears in a separate form as Ps. lxx., where consult the notes for the variations, &c.

BE PLEASED (omitted in Ps. lxx.), here used apparently with reference to "Thy pleasure," ver. 8.

The whole of the conclusion of this Psalm reminds us of the conclusion of Ps. xxxv.

- 14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together  
That seek after my life to destroy it!  
Let them be turned backward, and put to shame,  
That wish me evil!
- 15 Let them be struck dumb as a reward of their shame,  
That say to me, Aha, Aha!
- 16 Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee!  
Let such as love Thy salvation say always,  
"Jehovah be magnified."
- 17 And as for me,—afflicted and poor, the Lord thinketh  
upon me.  
Thou art my Help and my Deliverer:  
O my God, make no long tarrying.
- 

## PSALM XLI.

THIS Psalm seems to have been written in a season of recovery from sickness, and under a deep sense of the hypocrisy and ingratitude of false friends, who came to the Psalmist pretending to condole with him in his sickness, whilst in reality they hated him in their hearts and wished for his death. In this respect the Psalm has some resemblance to Ps. xxxviii., except that there the sufferer is deserted by his friends, and has to complain of their coldness rather than of their treachery.

The Psalm opens with a eulogy pronounced on those who know how to feel for and show compassion to the miserable and the suffering. This is evidently designed in order to condemn more forcibly, by way of contrast, the opposite line of conduct which is the subject of complaint. The Psalmist's own experience of the baseness and hollowness of the men who surrounded him made him only appreciate more sensibly the great value of faithful sympathizing friends in a season of affliction.

The Psalm consists of three parts :—

- I. A blessing on those who with watchful love and compassion are

ever ready to succour the needy and the distressed. Such men shall themselves experience the favour and loving-kindness of Jehovah when they are laid on a bed of sickness. Ver. 1—3.

II. The Psalmist himself had found no sympathy. On the contrary, although (as I think is implied in the former part of the Psalm) he had ever been ready to sympathize with others, he found, now that he was himself in pain and suffering, the utter hollowness of those who in brighter hours had called themselves his friends. (And one is reminded of the complaint of Job, chaps. xxix. xxx.) Even the most trusted counsellor, the most honoured guest, had treacherously turned against him. Ver. 4—9.

III. A prayer that, being restored to health, of God's mercy, he may be permitted to chastise his enemies; and an expression of his confidence that God will not suffer his enemies to triumph, but will, as in times past, so now also deliver him. Ver. 10—12.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

1 BLESSED is he that considereth the miserable :

In the day of evil Jehovah will deliver him.

2 Jehovah will keep him, and save him alive ;

He shall be blessed in the land :

And give Thou not him over to the will of his enemies :

3 Jehovah will support him on the couch of languishing :

All his bed hast Thou changed in his sickness.

1. THE MISERABLE, or "the suffering:" the word is one of wide meaning, and is used of the poor (as in Exod. xxx. 15), of the lean and weak in body (as Gen. xli. 19), of the sick in mind (as 2 Sam. xiii. 2).

2. IN THE LAND. On this Calvin remarks: "It might indeed appear absurd, that he promises himself a happy life in the world, for our condition were hard indeed if a better lot did not await us elsewhere: but because many had despaired of his recovery, he expressly says that he

shall still survive, and that not without manifest tokens of God's grace:—words which by no means exclude the hope of a better life." The expression is, of course, due to that prominence given to temporal reward which was characteristic of the Old Testament.

3. HIS BED. The word above rendered "couch" means more strictly the bed itself, whereas this denotes rather the keeping the bed in sickness.

THOU HAST CHANGED. Many

- 4 As for me—I said : “Jehovah, be gracious unto me ;  
Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.”
- 5 Mine enemies say evil of me :  
“When will he die and his name have perished ? ”
- 6 And if he come to see (me), he speaketh vanity,  
His heart gathereth iniquity to itself ;  
(When) he goeth abroad, he speaketh (it).
- 7 Together against me do all that hate me whisper ;  
Against me do they devise evil for me :
- 8 “Some shocking thing (they say) is poured out upon him.  
And (now) that he lieth, he shall rise up no more.”
- 9 Yea mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted,  
Who did eat of my bread,  
Hath lifted up his heel against me.

understand this of the refreshment and ease given to the sufferer by the smoothing of the pillow, &c. ; and hence the E. V., “Thou wilt *make* all his bed,” &c. But the meaning rather is : “It is no longer a sick bed, for Thou hast healed him of his disease.”

4—9. The hypocrisy of his pretended friends described. Their conduct is precisely the opposite of that which he has just before commended. They come to visit him indeed, but not from motives of compassion, but with the secret hope that they may see him perish.

4. AS FOR ME—I SAID. The pronoun is emphatic, and marks both the transition from the previous eulogy of the compassionate man to the Poet's personal feelings and desires, and also the opposition to the “enemies” in the next verse.

FOR I HAVE SINNED, *i.e.* It is my sin which has brought this suffering on me : but obs. the prayer is, “Pardon my sin,” not “take away my suffering.” These words absolutely forbid an application of the whole Psalm to Christ.

8. SOME SHOCKING THING, lit. “thing of Be'ial,” which may mean either physical or moral evil. See xviii. 4. But the latter signification is the more common. Here the same form of expression occurs as in ci. 3, Deut. xv. 9, in both of which passages *moral* evil is meant. Perhaps, however, “a thing of Belial” is a punishment which coems for evil-doing.

9. WHO DID EAT OF MY BREAD. The Oriental feeling as to the sacredness of hospitality would stamp such conduct with peculiar blackness. If David wrote the Psalm, the ingratitude was the worse, because of the *honour* conferred on one who was admitted to the king's table (2 Sam. ix. 10 ff. ; 1 Kings xviii. 19).

Part of this verse is quoted by our Lord in John xiii. 18 as applicable to the treacherous conduct of Judas, but with the significant omission of the words “mine own familiar friend *whom I trusted* ;” for our Lord knew what was in Judas from the beginning, and therefore did not trust him. Nothing can be more decisive both as to the way in which quotations

- 10 But Thou, O Jehovah, be gracious unto me,  
 And raise me up, that I may requite them :  
 11 By this I know that Thou hast delight in me,  
 That mine enemy doth not shout over me.  
 12 And as for me,—in mine integrity Thou hast upheld me,  
 And settest me before Thy face for ever.  
 13 Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel,  
 From everlasting and to everlasting,  
 Amen, and Amen !

were made, and also as to the proper interpretation of the apparently strong phrase *ὡς ἡ γραφή πληρωθῇ*, with which the quotation is introduced. First, it is plain that *particular expressions* in a Psalm may be applicable to events which befel our Lord, whilst the whole Psalm is not in like manner applicable. And next it is evident that "the Scripture is fulfilled" not merely when a prediction receives its accomplishment, but when words descriptive of certain circumstances in the life of the O. T. saints find a still fuller and truer realization—one not foreseen by the Psalmist, yet one no less designed of God—in the circumstances of our Lord's

earthly life. This will be peculiarly the case here if Ahithophel be meant ; for as David was in much of his life a type of Christ, so the treachery of his trusted counsellor would be a foreshadowing of the treachery of Judas.

10. THAT I MAY REQUITE THEM. Such a wish cannot be reconciled with our better Christian conscience. We find a purer and nobler tone of feeling in vii. 4.

13 This last verse is no part of the original Psalm, but is merely a later doxology appended here when the Psalms were collected in order to mark the conclusion of the First Book. Similar doxologies occur at the end of the three following Books.





# THE PSALMS.



## BOOK II.

PSALMS XLII.—LXXII.

THE Second Book of the Psalms differs from the First by one distinguishing characteristic,—its use of the Divine name. In the First God is spoken of and addressed as Jehovah ; in the Second, as Elohim, the latter name being that which, in our Version, is rendered “God.” According to the computation given by Delitzsch, Jehovah occurs 272 times in the First Book, and Elohim but 15 times ; whereas in the Second, Elohim occurs 164 times, and Jehovah only 30 times. There is also another observable difference between the two Books. In the First, all those Psalms which have any inscription at all, are expressly assigned to David as their author ; whereas in the Second, we find a whole series attributed to some of the Levitical singers. These inscriptions will be found noticed in their place. With regard to the meaning of the Divine Names, and their peculiar and characteristic occurrence, it may suffice to refer to the articles JEHOVAH, GENESIS, and PENTATEUCH in Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*.

## PSALM XLII.

THIS Psalm, though its date and authorship are uncertain, leaves us in no doubt as to the locality in which it was written. The Sacred Poet was in the land beyond the Jordan, near the mountain ridges of Hermon (ver. 6), in that land which was “*emphatically the land of exile—the refuge of exiles.*” Many expositors are of opinion that the Psalm was written by David on the occasion of his flight from his son Absalom, when, as we read 2 Sam. xvii. 24, &c., having crossed the fords of the Jordan near Jericho, he ascended the eastern height and took refuge at Mahanaim. It was at this spot, consecrated in patriarchal times by the vision of the Hosts of God to Jacob,—this “*sanctuary of the trans-Jordanic region,*”—that the exiled monarch stationed himself, whilst the people that were with him spread themselves in the neighbouring wilderness. The words of the Psalm are supposed to describe his sense of the greatness of his loss as debarred from all access to the sanctuary of God in Zion. But there are expressions in it which are clearly not applicable to David’s circumstances at the time. David was not amongst enemies who would mock him for his trust in Jehovah (xlii. 3, 10); on the contrary, he was surrounded by friends who were full of devotedness to his person, and who possessed the same religious faith with himself (2 Sam. xvii. 27—29). David could hardly say at such a time, “*I go mourning all the day because of the oppression of the enemy*” (xlii. 9, xliii. 2), however bitterly he might feel the unnatural conduct of his son and the alienation of his subjects.

It has been conjectured that the Psalm is the lamentation of an exile, or one who was being carried into captivity; but the general tone of the Psalm is rather that of one looking for a *speedy* restoration to his native land.

There are good grounds for concluding that this Psalm and the next constituted originally but one Poem, though there can be no doubt that each Psalm is complete in itself; and it is conceivable that, though originally existing as one Poem, the present arrangement might have been adopted, the better to suit the purposes either of

personal or liturgical use. The language of the 43d Psalm, it is obvious, might be used by those who were not in the circumstances indicated in the 42d. We have traces of a similar separation in Ps. xl., the latter part of which appears in a detached form as Ps. lxx., and probably for the same reason.

Assuming, then, that the two Psalms are in fact one, the whole may be divided into three strophes, each consisting of five verses, and each closing with the same words.

I. The first expresses the longing of the soul after God and the service of His sanctuary (xlii. 1, 2); the deep sorrow occasioned by the taunts of scoffing enemies (ver. 3); the attempt to find comfort in the recollection of past occasions of spiritual blessing (ver. 4). The expostulation at the close forms a refrain with which the two following strophes are also concluded (ver. 5).

II. The sense of distance from God and of the loss of His Presence oppresses the soul yet more (ver. 6, 7); yet still there is the effort to rise out of this despondency (ver. 8); but again the enemies who reproach and who triumph occupy the foreground, while God seems to have forgotten, and his help to be far off (ver. 9). The expostulatory refrain recurs as at the end of the first strophe.

III. The tone here is throughout more hopeful. First there is the appeal to God's justice (xliii. 1); then the ground of that appeal (ver. 2 *a*); then a further expostulation (ver 2 *b*, *c*); then the prayer for Divine light and truth (ver. 3); and lastly, the confident hope of restoration to the land, and of being permitted again to join in the services of the sanctuary (ver. 4). The refrain as before (ver. 5).

[TO THE PRECENTOR. A MASKIL, OF THE SONS OF KORAH.]

- I. 1 As a hart which panteth after the water-brooks,  
     So panteth my soul after Thee, O God.  
 2 My soul is athirst for God, for the Living God ;

2. MY SOUL IS ATHIRST. The figure occurs again lxiii. 1. Comp. xxxvi. 8, 9, and Is. xli. 17, lv. 1; Jer. ii. 13. Of this thirst Robertson beautifully says : "There is a desire

in the human heart best described as the cravings of infinitude. We are so made that nothing which has limits satisfies. . . . Man's destiny is to be not dissatisfied, but for ever unsatis-

When shall I come, and appear before God?

3 My tears have been my food day and night,  
While they say unto me continually, "Where is thy  
God?"

4 These things would I remember, and pour out my soul  
in me,—

How I passed with the (festal) throng,

How I led them in procession to the house of God,

With the voice of loud song and thanksgiving,—a multi-  
tude keeping holy-day.

fied. . . . Infinite goodness—a beauty beyond what eye hath seen or heart imagined, a justice which shall have no flaw and a righteousness which shall have no blemish—to crave for that, is to be 'athirst for God.'" (*Sermons*, 2d Series, pp. 120, 121.)

THE LIVING GOD. Comp. lxxxiv. 2, not only as opposed to the gods of the heathen, but in opposition to all dead abstractions, all vague head-notions, as the Living Person, the Source and Fountain of all life, loving and loved in return, as xxxvi. 9.

WHEN SHALL I . . . APPEAR BEFORE GOD? This is a phrase commonly used of going to the sanctuary or temple: lxxxiv. 7; Ex. xxiii. 17; Deut. xvi. 16, xxxi. 11; 1 Sam. i. 22. But the longing for the sanctuary was because God's Presence was there peculiarly manifested.

3. MY TEARS HAVE BEEN, &c., *i.e.* they have been my daily portion, like my daily meal. See lxxx. 5, cii. 9, and Job iii. 24.

WHERE IS THY GOD? The bitterness of all taunts, see lxxix. 10, cxv. 2; Joel ii. 17; Micah vii. 10, and comp. xxii. 8, with Matt. xxvii. 43. "This is ever the way in religious perplexity: the unsympathizing world taunts or misunderstands. In spiritual grief they ask, Why is he not like others? In bereavements they call your deep sorrow unbelief. In mis-

fortune they comfort you, like Job's friends, by calling it a visitation . . . they call you an infidel, though your soul be crying after God. Specially in that dark and awful hour, 'Eloi, Eloi,' *He* called on God: they said 'Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save Him.'"—*Robertson*.

4. THESE THINGS WOULD I REMEMBER, or, "let me remember," "fain would I remember." In such a recollection there would be mingled feelings of bitterness and consolation. No doubt the thought of those happy days in which he had travelled with the festal caravan to the holy city, would make him feel more intensely his present loneliness, but it would also be a kind of solace in his sorrow, or, as Delitzsch terms it, "a bitter-sweet remembrance."

THESE THINGS, *viz.* what follows, how I once led the rejoicing multitudes in procession to the house of God.

WITH THE VOICE OF LOUD SONG, &c. These pilgrim caravans went up to Jerusalem with all the accompaniments of music and song (see 2 Sam. vi. 5, and the beautiful little collection of pilgrim songs preserved in Psalms cxx.—cxxxiv., which were inspired by and adapted to such occasions).

A MULTITUDE (a word occurring with the same reference, 2 Sam. vi. 19), in apposition with the THROG

- 5 Why art thou bowed down, O my soul,  
 And (why) art thou disquieted in me?  
 Hope in God ; for I shall yet give Him thanks,  
 (Who is) the health of my countenance and my God.

## II. 6 [My God,] my soul is bowed down in me :

mentioned above : KEEPING HOLY-DAY, or festival ; the word is used absolutely, as in Exod. xxiii. 14.

5. WHY ART THOU BOWED DOWN? lit. "Why bowest thou thyself down?" "David here presents himself to us," says Calvin, "divided into two parts." It is the struggle between the spirit of faith and the spirit of dejection, between the higher nature and the lower, between the spirit and the flesh. The true I speaks ; the faith which is born of God rebukes the depression and gloom of his natural infirmity.

DISQUIETED, a word used elsewhere of the raging and roaring of the sea (as xlv. 3) : His soul is tossed and agitated like an angry sea.

IN GOD. "This hope was in God. The mistake we make," says Robertson, "is to look for a source of comfort in ourselves : self-contemplation instead of gazing upon God ;" and then, after showing that it is impossible to derive consolation from our own *feelings*, because they are so variable, or from our own *acts*, because in a low state no man can judge of these aright, and warning us that besides, whilst engaged in this self-inspection, we lose time in remorse, he continues, "When we gaze on God, then first the chance of consolation dawns. He is not affected by our mutability : our changes do not alter Him. When we are restless, He remains serene and calm : when we are low, selfish, mean, or dispirited, He is still the unalterable I AM, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, in whom is no variability, neither

shadow of turning. What God is in Himself, not what we may chance to feel Him in this or that moment to be, that is our hope. 'My soul, hope thou IN GOD.'"

I SHALL YET GIVE HIM THANKS, *i.e.* I shall do again as I have done before. Once I went . . . with the voice of song and *thanksgiving*, ver. 4, . . . and again I shall *give Him thanks*.

6. The first division of the Psalm ends with the exhortation addressed to the soul in its despondency, "Why art thou cast down?" and with an effort to rise into a brighter region of hope. But the gloom is too deep to be so soon dispersed. Therefore this second strophe opens with the complaint, "My soul is bowed down."

Throughout this second portion of the Psalm, the constant fluctuations, the alternations of despondency and hope, are very remarkable. "My soul is cast down,—therefore will I remember Thee. All thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me,—Jehovah will command His loving-kindness. I will pray unto God,—though my prayer be nothing but the out-pouring of my complaint. God is my Rock,—even whilst I say, Why hast Thou forgotten me?"

MY SOUL IS BOWED DOWN. The rendering of the LXX. here, ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐπαράχθη, and that in the previous verse, of the words, Why art thou cast down, &c., τὸ πᾶν τοῦ ἐν ψυχῇ μου, are both appropriated by our Lord ; the former in John xii. 27, the latter in Matt. xxvi. 38.

Therefore do I remember Thee from the land of Jordan.

And (from) the Hermons, from the mountain of Mizar.

7 Deep calleth unto deep at the voice of Thy cataracts;

All Thy breakers and Thy billows have passed over me.

8 (Yet) in the day-time will Jehovah command His loving-kindness;

And in the night His song (shall be) with me,

A prayer unto the God of my life.

9 (So) will I say unto God my Rock, "Why hast Thou forgotten me?"

THEREFORE DO I REMEMBER, in that strange land so much the more. Comp. the prayer of Jonah, ii. 4.

THE LAND OF JORDAN, *i.e.* the country east of the Jordan, which had this special designation.

THE HERMONS, or the peaks or ridges of Hermon, the plural being used either because of the *two* peaks of the mountain (Wi son, *Land of the Bible*, ii. 161), or perhaps of the whole range of its snowy heights.

MIZAR, apparently the name of some one of the lesser peaks of the same mountain range, though the particular peak cannot now be identified. The older translators generally supposed the word to be used merely as an appellative, in its literal sense, of "littleness" or "contempt," as if the Sacred Poet were anxious to express how little in his eyes seemed even that giant range, with all its snows and forests, compared with the true greatness and dignity of the holy hill of Zion. But the objection to such an interpretation is, that the Hebrew Poets do not seek to depreciate the greater mountains of Hermon and Bashan, in comparison with Zion, but rather to raise Zion to a level, or to exalt it above these. Hengstenberg supposes that the name of "contempt" designates not the particular

mountain, but the whole trans-Jordanic territory.

7. DEEP CALLETH UNTO DEEP. One vast body of water seems to summon another, as if on purpose to swallow him up.

AT THE VOICE OF, *i.e.* accompanied by the sound of, &c. THY CATARACTS, or waterfalls; such seems to be the meaning here.

BREAKERS . . . BILLOWS. The first, from a Hebrew verb meaning "shiver, break," with the same idea in Hebrew as in English, of the waves *breaking* on the shore; the last of the waves as *rolling*.

8. WILL COMMAND. A bright ray of hope which gleams upon the singer in the midst of his present despondency. God will command,—send, that is, like a divine Iris, or heavenly messenger, His loving-kindness. So xliii. 3, "Send Thy Light and Thy Truth," &c.

IN THE NIGHT, not to be emphasized, as if intended in opposition to IN THE DAY, but day and night are used poetically to describe the *continuance* of the action.

HIS SONG, comp. Job xxxv. 10.

9. (SO) WILL I SAY. The resolve which follows, based on this his hope in the goodness of God.

- Why go I mourning because of the oppression  
of the enemy?"
- 10 As though they would break my bones, mine  
enemies reproach me,  
While they say unto me all day long, "Where  
is thy God?"
- 11 Why art thou bowed down, O my soul,  
And (why) art thou disquieted in me?  
Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him,  
(Who is) the health of my countenance, and  
my God.

## XLIII.

- III. 1 JUDGE me, O God,  
And plead my cause against an ungodly nation;  
From the man of deceit and wrong rescue me!
- 2 For Thou art the God of my strength:  
Why hast Thou cast me off,  
Why go I to and fro mourning because of the  
oppression of the enemy;
- 3 O send forth Thy Light and Thy truth; let *them*  
lead me,

1. JUDGE ME, *i.e.* "show the justice of my cause," "pronounce sentence for me," as often elsewhere. AGAINST, lit. "from." A brief form of expression for the fuller, "Plead my cause, so as to deliver me from."

UNGODLY, lit. "not godly," or perhaps "not-good," if the adjective be taken here as in xii. 1, in its active sense; hence "cruel," "unmerciful."

2. The question is repeated from xiii. 9, but in a stronger form. Not "Why hast Thou forgotten?" but "Why hast Thou cast off?"

3. The one object of his heart's desire is to be restored to the house of God.

LIGHT and TRUTH (instead of the more usual Loving-kindness and Truth)—these shall be to him, so he hopes, as angels of God, who shall lead him by the hand, till they bring him to the holy mountain, to the tabernacle, and to the altar, there to offer his thank-offerings. Or possibly there may be an allusion to the Urim and Thummim, as the symbol of Light and Truth. See the article



Let them bring me to Thy holy mountain, and to Thy  
tabernacles.

- 4 So will I come unto the altar of God,  
Unto God my exceeding joy:  
Yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God.
- 5 Why art thou bowed down, O my soul,  
And why art thou disquieted in me?  
Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him,  
(Who is) the health of my countenance, and my God.

“Urim and Thummim,” by the Rev.  
E. H. Plumptre, in *Smith’s Dict. of  
the Bible*.

denote the *several parts* of the build-  
ing, but see on lxxxiv. 1.

TABERNACLES. The plural may

4. GOD MY EXCEEDING JOY, lit.  
“God the joy of my exultation.”

## PSALM XLIV.

THERE is scarcely any Psalm which seems at first sight to furnish a more decided clue to the probable date of its composition than this, and yet leaves us, after all, in so much uncertainty. The notes of time are apparently three.

1. The conquest of Palestine was looked back upon as distant, “the times of old.”

2. The period was a period of great national distress; the people were hard pressed by enemies.

3. All this had come on them *not* as a judgment for national sin: hence the age must have been one when the nation was holding fast to the worship of Jehovah and eschewing idolatry.

This last circumstance is so peculiar, that we might expect it to decide the question.

Now we know of no period of Jewish history previous to the Exile, when the assertion would be true that the people had not forgotten God nor “stretched out their hands to any strange god.” Hence

many interpreters refer the Psalm to the time of the Maccabees, and the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. Others again refer the Psalm to the time immediately preceding the Exile ; others suppose it to have been written in the time of David.

Calvin says with perfect truth that, if anything is clear, it is that the Psalm was written by anyone rather than by David. The complaints which it contains, he observes, are most suitable to the wretched and calamitous time when the cruel tyranny of Antiochus was exercised without check ; or we may extend it more widely, inasmuch as almost any time after the return from the Exile was a time of trouble and rebuke.

This Psalm, if not composed in the time of the Maccabees, was, we are told, used daily in the liturgy of that time. Each day the Levites ascended the pulpit and cried aloud, "Awake, why sleepest Thou, O Jehovah?" These Levitical Muezzin were termed "wakers." John Hyrcanus put an end to this custom, saying, "Doth God sleep? Hath not the Scripture said, 'The Keeper of Israel slumbereth not, nor sleepeth.' It was only in reference to a time when Israel was in trouble, and the nations in rest and prosperity, that it was said, 'Awake, why sleepest thou, O Jehovah?'"

The Psalm consists of four principal divisions :—

I. The Sacred Poet calls to mind the great deeds which God had wrought for His people in the days of old. God alone, he confesses, had given them possession of the land of Canaan, and had driven out their enemies before them. Remembering this, they had ever made their boast in His Name, and would still continue to praise Him. Ver. 1—8.

II. Most painful is the contrast of the present with the past. God has forgotten His people. He has given them over into the hand of enemies, who hate, and insult, and slay them. God goes not forth now with their armies, as He had done when He brought them into Canaan : they are scattered among the heathen and sold for nought. Ver. 9—16.

III. And yet this cannot be a chastisement for their transgressions ; for they have not forgotten God, but, on the contrary, die the death of martyrs for His truth. Ver. 17—22.

IV. Therefore he prays that God the Saviour of His people, and the Giver of Victory, would again be favourable unto them, as of old, and redeem them from their enemies. Ver. 23—26.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. OF THE SONS OF KORAH. A MASKIL.]

1. 1 O GOD, with our own ears we have heard,  
Our fathers have told us,  
A work Thou didst work in their days,  
In the days of old.
- 2 Thou, with Thine own hand, didst dispossess (the)  
nations,  
And didst plant *them* in :  
Thou didst afflict (the) peoples,  
And cause *them* to spread abroad.
- 3 For not by their own sword gat they the land in  
possession,  
Neither did their own arm give them the victory ;

1. The Psalm opens with a glance at the past history of the nation, and the acknowledgement that from the first every victory which they had won, had been won, not by their own strength, but by the immediate hand of God. This was, it might be said, the perpetual lesson of their history. They did not rise upon their Egyptian masters, but God bowed the heart of the monarch and the people by His signs and wonders, till they thrust them out in haste. At the Red Sea they did not turn to fight with the chariots and the horsemen of Pharaoh: they were but to *stand still*, and see the victory of Jehovah. When they came to Canaan, their first exploit was not a feat of arms; for Jericho fell by a miracle. The Roman army, by the lake Regillus, attributed its victory to the two mysterious horsemen who, on their white horses, led the charge. The Jewish host with a better faith believed that in every battle an invisible Captain led them, and knew that, whenever they conquered their enemies, it was because an invisible arm gave them the victory.

OUR FATHERS HAVE TOLD US, in

accordance with the duty so often impressed upon the minds of the people, to perpetuate from generation to generation "the mighty acts" of Jehovah, on their behalf. See Exod. x. 2, and comp. xii. 26, &c., xiii. 8, 14; Deut. vi. 20; Judges vi. 13.

2. DIDST PLANT *them* IN . . . DIDST CAUSE THEM TO SPREAD *them* ABROAD. In each case the pronoun refers to "our fathers," who are thus emphatically contrasted with the "nations" and "peoples" who were dispossessed. The figure is taken from the planting and growth of a vine, and is carried out in Ps. lxxx. It first occurs in Exod. xv. 17, "Thou wilt *plant* them in the mountain of Thine inheritance." Comp. 2 Sam. vii. 10, and Ps. lxxx. 8. For the other verb, "Thou didst spread them abroad" (like the roots and branches of a tree), comp. lxxx. 11, Jer. xvii. 8, Ezek. xvii. 6.

3. FOR, a more emphatic insisting upon the truth that God's power alone had achieved all.

GIVE THEM THE VICTORY. Such seems here, and generally in this Psalm, to be the force of the word

But Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the Light  
of Thy countenance,

Because Thou hadst a favour unto them.

4 Thou, even Thou Thyself, art my King, O God :  
Command the victories of Jacob.

5 Through Thee shall we push down our adversaries ;  
In Thy Name shall we tread them under that rise  
up against us.

6 For not in my bow do I trust,  
And my soul cannot give me the victory :

7 But THOU hast given us the victory over our adver-  
saries,

And hast put to shame them that hate us.

8 In God have we made our boast all the day long,  
And to Thy name will we for ever give thanks.

[Selah.]

II. 9 But Thou hast cast (us) off, and put us to confusion,  
And goest not forth with our hosts.

10 Thou makest us to turn back from (the) adversary,

usually rendered "save," "help."  
See above, xxxiii. 17.

The RIGHT HAND and the ARM, as emblems of *power*; the LIGHT OF THY COUNTENANCE, as the manifestation of God's *grace*; the last further explained by, "because Thou hadst a favour," &c. Comp. Deut. iv. 37.

4—8. Application of this acknowledged truth to the present and to the future.

4. MY KING, apparently with a personal application to himself, the Poet individually claiming his own place in the covenant between God and His people.

COMMAND, in Thy royal majesty, as an act of sovereign authority.

5. PUSH DOWN, an image taken from horned cattle, and of common occurrence in the Old Testament, borrowed, in the first instance, it would seem, from the fat buffaloes in

the pastures of Bashan. See Deut. xxxiii. 17. Comp. also Ps. lxxv. 4, 10; Ezek. xxxiv. 21; Dan. viii. 4; 1 Kings xxii. 11.

6. The same contrast here and in the next verse as before in ver. 3.

8. The past experience of God's saving might is the reason that they praise and thank Him.

9—16. The painful contrast in the experience of the present, to all the warrant of the past, and all the hopes which had sprung from the past.

9. GOEST NOT FORTH, *i.e.* as leader of the army (see Judg. iv. 14; 2 Sam. v. 24), as once visibly with the pillar of a cloud, and the pillar of fire before the host in the desert. This verse occurs almost word for word in Ps. lx., with which, and lxxxix., this Psalm has many points of resemblance.

10. FOR THEMSELVES. "At their own will."

- And they which hate us have spoiled for themselves :
- 11 Thou makest us like sheep (appointed for) food,  
And Thou hast scattered us among the nations.
- 12 Thou sellest Thy people for nought,  
And hast not increased (Thy wealth) by their price.
- 13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours,  
A scorn and a derision to them that are round  
about us.
- 14 Thou makest us a proverb among the nations,  
A shaking of the head among the peoples.
- 15 All the day is my confusion before me,  
And shame hath covered my face,
- 16 Because of the voice of him that reproacheth and blas-  
phemeth,

11. HAST SCATTERED. This may perhaps refer to the Babylonish captivity. De Wette, however, who in the first edition of his Commentary thought this and the next verse most applicable to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, quotes 2 Macc. v. 11—23, where we are informed that Antiochus Epiphanes, on his return from Egypt, carried Jerusalem by storm, slew in three days 40,000 Jews, and had as many more sold as captives. Hence, according to him, the allusion in the following verse.

12. THOU SELLEST. This need not be explained literally of an historical fact (see note on last verse): it is a figure expressive of God's giving up His people into *slavery* to their enemies, just as, on the other hand, their deliverance is described as *redemption, ransoming*.

FOR NOUGHT, lit. "for not-riches," *i.e.* for that which is the very opposite of riches, a mere nothing.

HAST NOT INCREASED, *i.e.* hast gained nothing. This verse is almost an expostulation with God. An earthly ruler might sell men like cattle to increase his own wealth, but God

cannot be richer by such merchandise. Calvin's remark, however, is of importance, as bearing on all this attributing of their calamities to God: "We must observe, however, that God is represented as the author of these calamities, not by way of reproaching Him, but that the faithful may with the more confidence seek the remedy from the Hand which hath smitten and wounded."

13. THEM THAT ARE ROUND ABOUT US (lit. "our surroundings," lxxix. 4, comp. lxxx. 6), *i.e.* nations like the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, the bitterest enemies of the Jews, whose insulting mockery in the day of their triumph is often the subject of complaint in the later Prophets.

14. A PROVERB (*māshāl*) or "by-word," often used of words uttered in mockery. Comp. lxix. 12; ls. xiv. 4, possibly also the verb, Numb. xxi. 27 ("they that speak in proverbs," E. V.), where the taunting Amorite song is quoted.

SHAKING OF THE HEAD. See on xxii. 7.

16. THE AVENGER. See on viii. 2.

Because of the enemy and the avenger.

- III. 17 All this is come upon us, and (yet) we have not forgotten Thee,  
 Neither have we dealt falsely in Thy covenant ;  
 18 Our heart is not turned back,  
 Neither has our step declined from Thy path,—  
 19 For Thou hast crushed us in the place of jackals,  
 And covered us with the shadow of death :—  
 20 If we had forgotten the Name of our God,  
 And stretched out our hands to any strange god,  
 21 Would not God search this out ?  
 For He knoweth the secrets of the heart.  
 22 But for thy sake are we slain all the day long ;  
 We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

17—22. A complaint that all these calamities have come upon them without any fault or demerit on the part of the nation. Such a complaint is doubly remarkable. First, because as an assertion of *national* innocence and faithfulness to God's covenant, it is without parallel in the Old Testament, and next, because it wears the air of a reproach cast upon the righteousness of God, in permitting the chastisement.

It is on the ground of this national adherence to the covenant, that the Psalmist expostulates with God, who has given them over into the hand of their enemies. Such chastisement appears to him unmerited. There is nothing apparently in the conduct of the nation at large to call for it. God seems pledged by His very faithfulness to take away the rod. Such an expostulation, however, it is clear, can only be defended as coming from a saint under the Old Testament dispensation. No nation, no Church now could, in the eyes of any of its members, be so pure, that chastise-

ment laid upon it would seem undeserved or unneeded. The work of the Spirit has given a deeper view of sin, has shown how much hidden corruption may consist with the open profession of godliness, and has taught us to confess national guilt in every national punishment.

18. The negative must be repeated with the second clause of the verse from the first.

19. PLACE OF JACKALS, a dreary, waste, howling wilderness, commonly described by the Prophets as inhabited by such creatures. See the similar expression "a dwelling of jackals," used with a like figurative meaning, Jer. ix. 11, x. 22, &c.

20. STRETCHED OUT OUR HANDS, *i.e.* in prayer. Comp. cxliii. 6, and see xxviii. 2.

21. This solemn appeal to God's omniscience shows the honest conviction of the national integrity, while it is an indication at the same time that the sense of sin was comparatively superficial.

22 FOR THY SAKE. This passage

- IV. 23 Awake, why sleepest Thou, O Lord ?  
 Arise, cast not off for ever.
- 24 Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face ?  
 Why forgettest Thou our affliction (and) our  
 oppression ?
- 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust ;  
 Our body cleaveth to the earth.
- 26 Do Thou arise, to be a help unto us !  
 And redeem us, for Thy loving-kindness' sake.

is cited by St. Paul, Rom. viii. 36, apparently from the LXX., in illustration of the fact, that the Church of God has in all ages been a persecuted Church. But there is this remarkable difference between the tone of the Psalmist and the tone of the Apostle. The former cannot understand the chastening, complains that God's heavy hand has been laid with-

out cause upon his people : the latter can rejoice in persecutions also, and exclaim, "Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."

25. IS BOWED DOWN, Cf. xlii. 5. CLEAVETH TO THE EARTH, alluding to the custom of mourners sitting down in dust and ashes. See xxxv. 14.

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## PSALM XLV.

THIS Psalm is evidently a Marriage-song composed for some day of royal espousals. It celebrates the nuptials of a Jewish king with a princess, apparently of foreign extraction : but in honour of what particular king it was written, is matter of conjecture. The older and perhaps the more common interpretation refers it to Solomon's nuptials with the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

On the whole, the general character of the Psalm, describing as it does the majesty and persuasive eloquence of the king, the splendour of his appearance and of his palace, and the hopes which he raised for the future, is such as to make it more justly applicable to Solomon than to any other of the Jewish monarchs, so far as we are acquainted with their fortunes. Nor is it necessarily an objection to this view, that

the monarch in the Psalm is spoken of as a warrior, whilst Solomon was peculiarly "a man of peace." Something must be allowed to poetry. An extended dominion would naturally be associated with ideas of conquest. And with the recollection of the father's exploits fresh in his mind, the Poet could not but regard warlike virtues as essential to the glory of the son. Besides, Solomon himself does not seem to have been deficient in military spirit. Either in person or by his captains he carried his arms far to the east, and conquered the district Hamath Zobah, lying near the Euphrates. He took pains to strengthen the fortifications of various towns in his dominions, as well as the "Millo" or citadel of Jerusalem, and added largely to the army which he already possessed, by the introduction of a new kind of force, consisting of chariots and horses, and amounting, we are told, to 1,400 chariots, and 12,000 horsemen. Why should not the Poet say, addressing such a king, "Gird thee with the sword upon thy thigh—in thy majesty ride forth and prosper"?

But "a greater than Solomon is here." Evident as it is that much of the language of the Poem is only properly applicable to the circumstances of the royal nuptials which occasioned it, it is no less evident that much of it greatly transcends them. The outward glory of Solomon was but a type and foreshadowing of a better glory to be revealed. Israel's true king was not David or Solomon, but One of whom they, at the best, were only faint and transient images. A righteous One was yet to come who should indeed rule in truth and equity, who should fulfil all the hopes which one human monarch after another, however fair the promise of his reign, had disappointed, and whose kingdom, because it was a righteous kingdom, should endure for ever. Such a ruler would indeed be the vicegerent of God. In such an one, and by such an one, God would reign. He would be of the seed of David, and yet more glorious than all his fellows; human, and yet above men. It was because of this wonderfully close and real relation between God and Man—a relation which the true king would visibly symbolize—that the Psalmist could address him as God. In him God and Man would in some mysterious manner meet. This perhaps he did see; more than this he could not see. The mystery of the Incarnation was not yet revealed. But David knew that God had made man to be but little short of divine (Ps. viii. 5). And he and others, full of hopes, the very greatness of which made them indistinct, uttered them in words that went far beyond themselves.



The mistake so commonly made in interpreting this Psalm and the Song of Solomon, is to suppose that we have in them *allegories*, every part of which is to find its appropriate spiritual interpretation. The earthly fact has, *as a whole*, its spiritual counterpart. For Christ speaks of Himself as "the Bridegroom," and of the Church as His "bride," and of the kingdom of God under the figure of a marriage-feast. (Matt. xxii. 1, &c., xxv. and ix. 15. See also Ephes. v. 32, 2 Cor. xi. 2, and Rev. xix. 7, xxi. 2.) The same figure also occurs in the Old Testament. God speaks of Himself as the bridegroom of the Jewish *people* (Is. liv. 5, lxii. 5, Jer. iii. 1, Ezek. xvi. 8, Hos. i. ii.), not, however, observe, of any *individual*, as the Mystics are wont to speak. But this Psalm is not an *allegory*. It is the actual celebration of a circumstance in Jewish history, and deriving its higher meaning from the fact that all Jewish history is typical.

The Messianic interpretation of the Psalm is the most ancient. The Chaldee paraphrast on ver. 2, writes: "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than that of the sons of men." And even the later Jews take the same view. Aben-Ezra says: "This Psalm treats of David, or rather of His Son Messiah, for that is His name, Ezek. xxxiv. 24, 'And David My servant shall be their prince for ever.'"

In the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 8, 9) the writer rests upon this Psalm, among others, his argument for the Divine Nature of Christ.

The Psalm consists of two principal divisions, and a brief conclusion in the shape of auguries for the future.

I. The praise of the royal bridegroom. His more than human beauty, his persuasive eloquence, his might and prowess in war, his divine majesty, and the righteousness of his sway, are extolled. Ver. 1—9.

II. The description of the royal bride, her gold-inwoven garments, the virgins who follow in her train, the music and songs of the bridal procession. Ver. 10—15.

III. Anticipations and hopes expressed for the children by the marriage, who shall perpetuate the dynasty of the monarch, so that his name shall be famous for ever. Ver. 16, 17.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. "ON THE LILIES."\* OF THE SONS OF  
KORAH. A MASKIL. A SONG OF LOVE.]

- 1 MY heart is overflowing with a goodly matter ;  
I am speaking ;—my work is for a King :  
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.
- 2 Beautiful art Thou beyond the children of men ;  
Grace is shed upon Thy lips :  
Therefore hath God blessed Thee for ever.
- 3 Gird Thy sword upon (the) thigh, O mighty One,  
(Gird on) Thy glory and Thy majesty.

1. This verse is a kind of preface of a very unusual kind of Hebrew poetry, in which the singer tells how great his subject, and how full his heart is of it.

IS OVERFLOWING, lit. boils or bubbles up, his heart being stirred within him by the greatness of his subject. The metaphor may be taken either from boiling water, or from a fountain bubbling up from its source. And that which inspires him is A GOODLY MATTER (*ein feines Lied*, Luther), a subject worthy of his highest efforts (cf. Is. lii. 7, Zech. i. 13).

I AM SPEAKING—*sc.* it is thus that I begin. MY WORK, *i.e.* my poem, the work or creation of my imagination, is for a king, is dedicated to and inspired by him.

FOR A KING. I see no reason to supply the article which is wanting in the Hebrew, though interpreters, ancient and modern, with one consent render "*the King*." The absence of the article only makes it more emphatic. It is a King—not a meaner person—who is the object of my song.

2. The *beauty* of the monarch first

calls forth the Poet's praise (cf. Is. xxxiii. 17), and then his *persuasive* eloquence (Eccl. x. 12). Calvin observes, it were more kindly for kings to win their subjects' hearts by gracious words, than to rule them by brute force. So, too, of the Great Antitype, the true king, we read that men wondered at the gracious words (the *λόγοι τῆς χάριτος*, Luke iv. 22) that proceeded out of His lips: for the Lord hath given Him the tongue of the learned, that He might know how to speak a word in season to them that were weary (Is. l. 4).

THEREFORE, *i.e.* beholding this beauty and this grace, do I conclude that God hath blessed thee for ever. Such gifts are the proof of God's good-will towards thee.

3. But the king is not only fair to look at, and gracious of speech, but he is mighty in battle. The nations shall fall under him. Nevertheless, "in righteousness doth he make war," to uphold truth, and to avenge the oppressed. Instead, however, of directly celebrating his prowess, the singer calls on the king to go forth to battle, and predicts his victory.

\* See the same inscription Pss. lxi. and lxxx., and a similar one Ps. lx. It may have reference to an instrument, shaped like a lily, or it may refer to the measure according to which the psalm was to be sung.

- 4 Yea (in) Thy majesty ride on prosperously  
 On behalf of truth and righteous meekness;  
 And let Thy right hand teach Thee terrible things.
- 5 Thine arrows are sharp,—(while) people fall under Thee;  
 (They are sharp) in the heart of the King's enemies.
- 6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;  
 A sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy  
 kingdom.

4. YEA (IN) THY MAJESTY: repeated apparently for the sake of emphasis.

RIDE ON PROSPEROUSLY, lit. "make thy way, ride on," the first verb being used adverbially, to add force to the other "make thy way," *i.e.* either lit. "pass through" the ranks of the enemy, and overcome all obstacles, or metaph. "be successful." RIDE, either in the war-chariot (1 Kings xxii. 32), or on the war-horse, as in the Apocalyptic vision, xix. 11.

ON BEHALF OF, *i.e.* in order to assert and uphold, &c. Luth. *der Wahrheit zu gut*. This is the very loftiest conception of kingly might. The wars which such a king wages are not to acquire territory or renown.

6. THY THRONE, O GOD. I have retained the vocative, which is the rendering of all the Ancient Versions; and so the passage is quoted in Heb. i. 8. This rendering seems indeed at first sight to be at variance with the first and historical application of the Psalm. Can Solomon, or any Jewish king, be thus directly addressed as God? We find the title given to rulers, kings, or judges, lxxxii. 6, 7, "I said, ye are gods" (see our Lord's comment, John x. 35); Exod. xxi. 6, where E.V. has "judges," Heb. "gods." Calvin, indeed, objects that *Elohim* is only thus used when more than one person is meant, or with some restriction, as when Moses is said to be made a God (*Elohim*) unto Pharaoh (Exod. vii. 1). But the word is evidently used of one person in 1

Sam. xxviii. 13, as is plain from Saul's question, "What form is *he* of?" though our Version renders, "I saw *gods* ascending." Calvin, however, admits the first application to Solomon, only observing, that "though he is called *God*, because God hath stamped some mark of His glory upon kings, yet so high a title must go beyond any mere man." It is one of the indications, as he rightly remarks, that the Poet is thinking of a greater King, and a more illustrious kingdom ("canticum hoc altius quam ad umbratile regnum spectare"). The difficulty is to understand how far the writer himself saw the purport of his own words. That they have a meaning which is only fully realized in Christ, and that God designed this fulfilment, I, for one, most unhesitatingly admit. But on the other hand, it is impossible to suppose that the mystery of the Incarnation was distinctly revealed, and clearly understood, under the Old Testament dispensation. God does not thus make haste with men. I conclude, therefore, that in the use of such language the Psalmist was carried beyond himself, and that he was led to employ it by a twofold conviction in his mind, the conviction that God was the King of Israel, combined with the conviction that the Messiah, the true King, who was to be in reality what others were but in figure, was the son of David.

A SCEPTRE OF UPRIGHTNESS, and

- 7 Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness,  
Therefore God, (even) Thy God, hath anointed Thee  
With the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.
- 8 Myrrh and aloes (and) cassia are all Thy garments;  
Out of ivory palaces music hath made Thee glad.
- 9 Kings' daughters are among Thy beloved,  
The queen-consort stands at Thy right hand in gold  
of Ophir.
- 10 Hearken, O daughter, and see and incline thine ear:

in the next verse, "Thou hast loved righteousness." Not only is righteousness the kingliest of all virtues, but it is the necessary basis of a throne and a kingdom which are to endure for ever.

7. But this divine King is nevertheless a distinct person from God Himself. GOD, EVEN THY GOD, peculiar to this Book of the Psalms, instead of "*Jehovah* Thy God." See xliii. 4, l. 7, lxvii. 6. It is contrary to all usage to render the first noun as a vocative, "O God, Thy God hath," &c.

WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS. Scarcely therefore is this the act of coronation, the anointing to His office (cf. lxxxix. 20, with Acts x. 38), but rather the meaning is, that this king is, as it were, the very personification of gladness, beyond all the kings upon earth.

FELLOWS may either mean "other kings," or the friends who escorted him at his marriage.

8. The song of love here reaches its culminating point in the description of the king. It has portrayed the king as man, as warrior, as god-like ruler; now it pictures him as bridegroom on the day of his espousals. (Compare with this the vision of the Apocalypse, where the "King of kings" goes forth to war, followed by the armies in heaven, after which there follows "the mar-

riage of the Lamb." Rev. xix. 7, &c.)

MYRRH AND ALOES (AND) CASSIA. (Cf. Prov. vii. 17.) The royal garments are so filled with perfumes, that they seem to be nothing but perfumes.

And the marriage procession is accompanied by music.

9. KINGS' DAUGHTERS; other wives and concubines of the monarch. Such, as Calvin observes, is the evident meaning of the words, although, as polygamy had only the permission, not the sanction, of God, it may seem strange that this should be mentioned as a feature in the splendour of the monarch. But polygamy was practised even by the best of kings, and the Psalmist is describing the magnificence of an Oriental court, such as it actually existed before his eyes, not drawing a picture of what ought to be in a perfect state of things.

THE QUEEN-CONSORT, the distinguished title of the newly-married princess.

AT THY RIGHT HAND, as the place of honour; so Bathsheba, as queen-mother, sits on the right hand of Solomon, 1 Kings ii. 19.

10. The sacred Poet now turns to address the Bride. He bids her forget her father's house, and devote herself in reverent affection to her new lord, promising her at the same

- Forget also thine own people and Thy father's house,  
 11 That the King may desire thy beauty,  
 For He is thy lord, and do thou bow thyself down  
 before Him.
- 12 And the daughter of Tyre (shall come) with a gift :  
 The rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.
- 13 All glorious is the King's daughter in the inner palace,  
 Of thread of gold is her clothing.
- 14 On embroidered carpets of divers colours is she led forth  
 unto the King :  
 The virgins in her train, (that be) her companions,  
 Are brought unto Thee.
- 15 They are conducted with rejoicings and exultation ;  
 They enter into the King's palace.
- 16 Instead of Thy fathers, shall be Thy children,  
 Whom Thou shalt set as princes in all the earth.

time that rich gifts shall be poured out at her feet.

O DAUGHTER (like "my son," in the Book of Proverbs), a common Oriental style of address, when the person who employed it, either from age or authority, or as divinely commissioned, had a right to give instruction, such as a father might give to his child.

11. THY LORD. Cf. Gen. xviii. 12.

12. The "daughter of Tyre" is a mere personification of the people of Tyre, according to the well-known Hebrew idiom, "daughter of Zion," &c.

13. A description of the magnificent appearance presented by the queen, as she stands, or perhaps sits, beside the king on the throne, arrayed in her royal and bridal apparel *in the inner apartments of the palace*—the presence-chamber where the throne was placed. Her arrival there is anticipated in this verse, as the bridal procession is subsequently described ; unless, as Maurer suggests, this was not the king's palace, but some other,

where the bride was first lodged, and whence she was conducted to the king.

IN THE INNER PALACE (not "within," as E. V., whence have come the common interpretations, that the bride, the Church, must be pure within). *ἐν τοῖς ἐνwartois*, the further wall of the house, which was over against the principal entrance, and where the throne stood.

14, 15. The bridal procession described. The bride walks in Oriental fashion on the richly woven carpets spread for her feet, accompanied by her maidens, and a festive band with music, dancing, &c.

15. REJOICINGS, lit. "joys," the plural denoting fulness and manifoldness.

16 After having thus dwelt on the personal graces of the royal pair, the magnificence of their attire, and the splendour of their retinue, the Poet again addresses the King, and concludes with congratulations and hopes expressed as to the issue of the marriage. The monarch cannot trace his

17 Let me (then) make Thy name known through all generations ;

Therefore shall the peoples give Thee thanks for ever and ever.

descent from a long line of kings, but his children shall be better to him than royal ancestry. They shall be made princes in all the earth—or perhaps in all the *land*. Comp Solomon's princes, 1 Kings iv. 2, and Rehoboam's sons, 2 Chron. xi. 23.

This verse and those immediately preceding are, to my mind, evidence sufficient that this Psalm cannot, as a whole, be regarded as prophetic of the Messiah. It is only by doing violence to language that the spiritual sense is extracted ; and it seems to me far wiser to acknowledge at once

the mixed character of such Psalms as this. It does speak, no doubt, of One who is higher than the kings of earth, but it does so under earthly images. It is typical, partially, yet not altogether. The Sacred Poet sees the earthly king and the human marriage before his eyes, but whilst he strikes his harp to celebrate these, a vision of a higher glory streams in upon him. Thus the earthly and the heavenly mingle. The Divine penetrates, hallows, goes beyond the human ; but the human is there. See farther in Introduction and Notes to Ps. cx.

## PSALM XLVI.

THIS and the two following Psalms are hymns of triumph, composed on the occasion of some great deliverance. I am inclined to think that they all celebrate the same event, the sudden and miraculous destruction of the army of Sennacherib under the walls of Jerusalem. That proud host had swept the land. City after city had fallen into the power of the conqueror. The career of Sennacherib and his captains had been one uninterrupted success. The capital itself alone held out, and even there the enfeebled garrison seemed little likely to make a successful resistance. The swollen river had, in the language of the prophet, overflowed all its channels, and risen even to the neck. It was at this crisis that deliverance came. When there were no succours to be expected, when neither king nor army could help the city, God helped her. He, the Lord of Hosts, was

in the midst of her, keeping watch over her walls and defending her towers. His Angel went forth at dead of night and smote the host of the Assyrians, and when men awoke in the morning, there reigned in that vast camp the silence and the stillness of 'death. Such a deliverance must have filled the whole nation with wonder and joy. The old days of Moses and David would seem to have returned. The hopes of Prophets, so great and so glowing, yet so often apparently defeated, seemed now nearer to their accomplishment. The times were at hand when Jerusalem should be indeed the joy of the whole earth, when all nations should acknowledge Jehovah as their King. Her towers, her palaces, the temple of her God, stood in all their beauty, saved by a miracle from the spoiler's hand. God had made Himself known there as a sure refuge, and henceforth His Name would be acknowledged in the earth.

We should expect to find such a deliverance celebrated by songs of thanksgiving and triumph. We should expect to find in these songs some indications of the particular events which they were intended to commemorate. Accordingly we do find, especially in this Psalm and in the 48th, certain expressions which are most natural and most intelligible, on the supposition that they were written at this time. In this Psalm there occur, moreover, very remarkable coincidences, both in thought and expression, with those prophecies of Isaiah which were uttered in prospect of the Assyrian invasion. The Prophet had compared the Assyrian army about to come to a mighty river, the Nile or the Euphrates, overflowing its banks, carrying desolation far and wide, rising till it had submerged all but the most prominent objects. The Psalmist employs a like image when he compares the enemies of his country to an angry sea, its waves roaring, and the mountains trembling at the swelling thereof. Isaiah had described the peace and safety of Jerusalem, weak and defenceless as she seemed to all eyes but the eye of Faith, under the emblem of her own gently-flowing stream of Siloam (viii. 6). The Poet also sings the praises of that stream, whose channels make glad the city of God. Thus each has recourse to similar metaphors, and each heightens their effect by contrast. Again the Prophet had assured the house of David that it had a better defence than that of chariots and horses; and laughed to scorn the power of the enemy, saying, "Associate yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces . . . take counsel together, and ye shall come to nought . . . for God is WITH US" (*Immanu'El*); and had symbolized the promised deliver-

ance by the birth of the child, *Immanuel*. The ever-recurring thought of the Psalm is, "God is our refuge and defence;" "God is in the midst" of the Holy City; Jehovah (God) of Hosts IS WITH US (*Immanu*). The burden alike of Prophecy and Psalm is IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US.

Luther's noble hymn, "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott," is based upon this Psalm.

The Psalm consists of three strophes, the conclusion of each being marked by the *Selah*, and that of the last two by the refrain.

I. In the first, God is magnified as the one sure defence at all times. Those with whom God dwells can never fear, whatever perils may threaten. Ver. 1—3.

II. The peace of Zion is secured by the abiding presence of God in her; and the discomfiture of all her foes is certain. Ver. 4—7.

III. God has manifested but even now His saving might, in the great deliverance which He has wrought. His arm has been made bare, His voice has been heard, He is exalted in the earth. Ver. 8—11.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. OF THE SONS OF KORAH. UPON ALAMOITH.\*  
A SONG.]

- I. 1 GOD is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore do we not fear, though (the) earth be changed,  
And though (the) mountains be moved into the heart  
of (the) seas;
- 3 Though the waters thereof roar, though they be troubled,

1—3. First strophe. The safety and security of the people of God, even when the earth itself and the strong foundations of the earth are shaken. The revolutions and commotions of the political world are here described by images borrowed from the convulsions of the natural world—the earthquake which makes the mountains to tremble, the roaring

of the seas, &c. See below, ver. 6, where the figure is dropt.

2. **THOUGH THE MOUNTAINS, &c.** The strongest figure that could be employed, the mountains being regarded as the great pillars of the earth. See xviii. 7, lxxv. 3, lxxxii. 5; Job ix. 6.

3, 4. See another striking contrast, Is. x. 33, 34; xi. 1.

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\* To be sung *en soprano*. See Introd. p. 6.



Though the mountains quake with the swelling thereof. [Selah.]

II. 4 A stream (there is) whose channels make glad the city of God.

The holy place of the dwellings of the Most High.

5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;

God shall help her, when the morning dawns.

6 Nations roared; kingdoms were moved;

He uttered His voice,—the earth melteth.

7 Jehovah (God of) Hosts is with us;

A high tower unto us is the God of Jacob.  
[Selah.]

4—7. The peace and tranquillity of the city of God, whilst all is uproar and confusion without her walls.

4. A STREAM. The one never-failing stream of water with which Jerusalem was supplied, and which, in its gentle, undisturbed, refreshing flow, was an image of the peace and blessing which the Holy City enjoyed under the protection of her God. (See Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 181.) The probable allusion to *Is. viii. 6* has been already remarked on, and the metaphor may have been borrowed designedly, as Calvin suggests, “that the faithful might learn that, without any aid from the world, the grace of God alone was sufficient for them. . . . Therefore, though the help of God may but trickle to us, as it were, in slender streams, we should enjoy a deeper tranquillity than if all the power of the world were heaped up all at once for our help.”

5. SHE SHALL NOT BE MOVED. The antithesis to this follows in the next verse, “Kingdoms were moved.”

6. There is a manifest reference to verses 2, 3, though the figure there employed is now dropt, except so far

as we are reminded of it by the use of the same verbs, “roared,” “were moved,” words which are employed in other passages, both of natural and political convulsions.

UTTERED HIS VOICE, *i.e.* in thunder, on which the melting of the earth is described as following immediately. The thunder (called also in *xxix.* “the voice of Jehovah”) is the symbol of the Divine judgement. *Comp. xviii. 13*, and especially as explaining this passage, *lxxvi. 8*.

7. JEHOVAH (GOD OF) HOSTS. The name first occurs in the mouth of Hannah, *1 Sam. i. 11*, and is applied to God as the Great King whom all created powers, the armies both in heaven and in earth, obey. To this Name the Psalmist immediately subjoins another, “the God of Jacob,” the covenant God of His people. Thus we are reminded, as Calvin remarks, of the double prop on which our faith rests; the infinite power whereby He can subdue the universe unto Himself, and the fatherly love which He has revealed in His word. Where these two are joined together, our faith may trample on all enemies.

- III. 8 Come, behold the deeds of Jehovah,  
 Who hath done terrible things in the earth;  
 9 (Who) stilleth wars to the end of the earth,  
 Who breaketh (the) bow and cutteth (the) spear in  
 sunder,  
 (And) burneth (the) chariots in the fire.  
 10 Cease ye, and know that I am God,  
 I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted  
 upon the earth.  
 11 Jehovah (God of) Hosts is with us;  
 A high tower unto us is the God of Jacob. [Selah.]

8—11. The application of the general truth of God's Presence and help to the particular circumstances of the nation at the present crisis. Hence "Come, behold." Comp. lxvi. 5.

9. STILLETH. The participle expresses the *continuance* of the action. Who not only does so now, but will do so evermore, till His kingdom of peace shall be set up in all the earth. This hope, however, is not prominent here, as it is in Mic. iv. 3, Is. ii. 4, and ix. 5. "For every grave of the greaved (warrior) in the battle-tumult, and the (soldier's) cloak rolled in blood, shall be for burning, and fuel of fire" (where our Version has

most unhappily marred the sense, by inserting "but this"), on which follows the reign of peace of the Messiah.

10. CEASE YE. The verb is used absolutely here, as in 1 Sam. xv. 16, but, strictly speaking, the expression is elliptical. Lit. "Let your hand sink down," *i.e.* cease your efforts.

God Himself here "utters His voice," as sole Judge and Arbiter of the world. (So the A. S. paraphrase supplies "Then God answered and said by the Prophet.") What are all the fret and stir of armies, and captains of armies, and kings and kingdoms, in His sight, who is the Ruler and the Judge of all!

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## PSALM XLVII.

A HYMN of triumph, in which the singer calls upon all the nations of the earth to praise Jehovah as their King, and joyfully anticipates the time when they shall all become one body with the people of the God of Abraham. In this sense the Psalm may be called Messianic, a prophecy of the final triumph of God's kingdom upon

earth. The older expositors, for the most part, suppose it to have been written, like Psalm xxiv., on the occasion of the removal of the Ark to Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi.), and to be a prophecy of the Ascension of Christ, and of His kingly rule, as sitting at the right hand of the Father. The Rabbinical interpreters regard the Psalm as Messianic.

I think it probable that the Psalm was composed, like the 46th and 48th, after the defeat of Sennacherib; and Hupfeld is, I think, right in calling it "a lyrical expansion of the idea prominent in xlv. 10, that Jehovah is highly exalted above the nations, and the Great King over all the earth."

We have two strophes, the end of the first being marked by the *Selah*; but the subject of both is in fact the same, the second, ver. 5—9, being only a lyrical variation of the first, ver. 1—4. The chief difference is, that what is expressed as a wish or hope in the first part (ver. 3, 4), viz. that God would make the nations the inheritance of Israel, is in the second (ver. 8, 9) regarded as already accomplished.

Very probably this Psalm, like the 24th, was sung in choral antiphonies, one company of Levites beginning with the words "O clap your hands," &c. (ver. 1, 2), and another answering "He subdueth," &c. (ver. 3, 4). Then again the first company would take up the words, "God is gone up," &c. and would sing ver. 5, 6. The antichoir would respond in ver. 7 and 8; and finally both would unite in ver. 9.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. OF THE SONS OF KORAH. A PSALM.]

1 O ALL ye peoples, clap (the) hand;  
O shout unto God with the voice of singing!  
2 For Jehovah, Most High, is terrible,

1, 2. The nations called upon to do homage to Jehovah. Cf. Ps. lxvi. 1.

1. CLAP (THE) HAND . . . SHOUT, as demonstrations of joy, in solemn, festal procession. We have the for-

mer at the coronation of a new king, 2 Kings xi. 12, and so here the nations are to rejoice before their new monarch. See also 1 Sam. x. 24, and comp. Num. xxiii. 21, "the shout of a king."

- A great King over all the earth.  
 3 He subdued peoples under us,  
 And nations under our feet !  
 4 He chooseth for us our inheritance,  
 The pride of Jacob whom He loveth ! [Selah.]  
 5 God is gone up with a shout,  
 Jehovah with the voice of a trumpet.  
 6 Sing psalms to God, sing psalms;  
 Sing psalms to our King, sing psalms !  
 7 For God (is) King of all the earth ;  
 Sing psalms in skilful strains.  
 8 God is King over (the) nations ;  
 God sitteth upon His holy throne.  
 9 The princes of (the) peoples are gathered together,  
 (To be) a people of the God of Abraham :

3, 4. There is considerable difficulty in satisfactorily explaining these verses. They seem, at first sight, to refer to the past—to the destruction of the Canaanites, and the establishment of Israel in the promised inheritance. But I incline to take the verbs as in the present tense and paraphrase thus—“God is ever choosing Israel’s inheritance anew, inasmuch as He shows Himself to be the true and mighty Protector thereof.” The *present* may be used, as in civ. 2, where the act of creation is spoken of as present, because its results are present. Comp. Is. xiv. 1, where Israel’s restoration is described as another choosing.

4. THE PRIDE OF JACOB. Apparently the Holy Land is so styled here; probably also the *Excellency of Jacob* in Amos vi. 8, and perhaps in viii. 7, though not apparently in Nahum ii. 2. The Holy Land is so called, as the glorious possession wherein Jacob prides himself, because it is the gift of God’s love and favour.

5. GOD IS GONE UP. An expression taken from the entry of the Ark into the City of David, 2 Sam. vi. 15. Here God is said to ascend His royal Throne either in heaven, or in Zion, as manifesting and exercising His sovereignty. Cf. lxxviii. 18, and ix. 4, vii. 6.

WITH A SHOUT (A.-S. “with winsome song”). See note on ver. 1.

6. SING PSALMS. The word means both *to sing* and *to play*.

7. This verse contains the great subject of the Psalm, the reason why all nations are called to unite in this festal joy.

IN SKILFUL STRAINS, lit. “a skilful song,” a song either fine in its structure, or beautiful in its melody.

8. IS KING, lit. “hath become King,” has asserted and is exercising His sovereignty.

9. The prayer is answered, the hope is accomplished. The princes of the nations are gathered together, are come in one body, as it were, on a

10 For to God (belong) the shields of the earth ;  
Very high is He exalted.

day of solemn coronation, to do homage as vassals to their liege Lord and King, cii. 22, Is. lxvi. 18.

10. SHIELDS OF THE EARTH, *i.e.* Princes as the defenders and champions of their people.

## PSALM XLVIII.

THIS Psalm, there is every reason to suppose, was composed on the same occasion as the two preceding. It celebrates God's protecting care of Jerusalem, and especially the deliverance of the city from the army of Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. xix., Is. xxxvi. &c.), as may be inferred from the many verbal coincidences which present themselves, on a comparison of the Psalm with the prophecies of Isaiah relating to the Assyrian invasion (chaps. viii. xxviii., xxix. 1—7, xxxiii.). See the Introduction to Psalm xlvii.

From ver. 9 it may be inferred that the Psalm was intended to be sung in the Temple-service. The Rabbinical commentators refer this, like the preceding Psalms, to the times of the Messiah, and the struggle with Gog and Magog, which was to issue in the everlasting glory of Jerusalem.

It consists of three parts or strophes.

I. An Introduction, which, after an ascription of praise to God, describes the glory (ver. 2) and the security (ver. 3) of Zion, as the city in which God hath made Himself known. Ver. 1—3.

II. The defeat of the enemy. Because God thus dwells in Zion, and loves Zion, she has been saved out of the hand of the Assyrian. That mighty host, led by its kingly captains, did but look upon the city, and were confounded, as in a moment, broken as with the east wind, which breaks the ships of Tarshish, melting away, "like snow in the glance of the Lord." Ver. 4—8.

III. Thanksgiving to God, whose praise is not only in Zion, but in all the earth, and whose great deliverance the Poet would have remembered in all time to come. Ver. 9—14.

[A SONG. A PSALM. OF THE SONS OF KORAH.]

- I GREAT is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised,  
In the city of our God, (in) His holy mountain.
- 2 Beautiful in elevation, a joy of the whole earth,  
Is the mountain of Zion, the sides of the north,  
The city of (the) great King.

1—3. It is because Zion is the city of *God*, that she so far surpasses all other cities in beauty and renown. It is the Glory of His Presence which makes her glorious: the strength of His Presence which makes her safe.

1. GREATLY TO BE PRAISED.  
Comp. xcvi. 4, cxlv. 3.

THE CITY OF OUR GOD, as again in ver. 8. Comp. xlvii. 4.

2. BEAUTIFUL IN ELEVATION, or "rising aloft in beauty." This is precisely one of the most striking features in the topography of Jerusalem. "Its elevation," says Stanley, "is remarkable, occasioned not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judæa, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest table-lands in the country. Hebron, indeed, is higher still, by some hundred feet; and from the south, accordingly, the approach to Jerusalem is by a slight descent. But from every other side the ascent is perpetual; and to the traveller approaching Jerusalem from the west or east, it must have always presented the appearance, beyond any other capital of the then known world—we may add, beyond any important city that has ever existed on the earth—of a mountain city; breathing, as compared with the

sultry plains of the Jordan or of the coast, a mountain air; enthroned, as compared with Jericho or Damascus, Gaza or Tyre, on a mountain fastness." —*Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 170, 171.

A JOY OF THE WHOLE EARTH. Most recent interpreters render, "a joy of the whole *land*," a rendering which I am satisfied does not do justice to the largeness of the sacred Poet's conceptions. In a Psalm where the range of anticipation is so wide, and in which God's name is declared to be known to the ends of the earth, we must understand the language employed, in its broadest, not in its narrowest sense. Comp. Lam. ii. 15. "Is not this the city which they called the crown of beauty, a joy of the whole earth?" and Is. lx. 15, "a joy of many generations."

THE SIDES OF THE NORTH. It is not very clear what is meant by this expression here. In other passages it denotes "the furthest north," "the extremest regions of the north," as in Ezek. xxxviii. 6, 15, xxxix. 2, where it is used of the land of Gog. In Is. xiv. 13 (the only place, besides those mentioned, where it occurs), it seems to describe the locality of the Assyrian Olympus, or mount of the gods; but here, it must be remembered, the case is widely different, as the expression is

## 3 God in her palaces

Hath made Himself known as a high tower.

## 4 For lo! the kings were assembled,

They passed by together :

## 5 They saw (it), they were amazed ;

put into the mouth of the King of Assyria himself. But for a Jew to speak of Zion, the holy mountain, as if it were no more than some mountain of heathen fable, would have been nothing short of profanity.

One thing is clear, that by "the sides of the north" is indicated, in some sense or other, the topography of the Holy City. The question is, to what particular part of it the words refer. (1) Now Jerusalem itself did not lie on the north, but on the south side of the elevated table-land mentioned in a preceding note. But the *Temple* did lie north, *i.e.* north-east of the city ; and as the Temple was, in a peculiar sense, the dwelling-place of God, the Psalmist may have intended to designate this, when he spoke of "the sides of the north," the expression being sufficiently accurate for the purposes of poetry. Hence we have the Holy City regarded from three different points of view, viz. "the mount Zion" (the city of David), "the sides of the north" (Mount Moriah and the Temple), "the City of the Great King" (Jerusalem proper, comp. Matt. v. 35). (2) If, however, Zion be the peak now leveled on the north of the Temple Mount, as Fergusson (*Essay*, p. 55 ff.) and Thrupp (*Ancient Jerusa em*, p. 17 ff.) suppose, "the mount Zion (on) the sides of the north" may be the true rendering here. And this, too, might peculiarly be called "beautiful for elevation," as it was the highest point of the whole plateau, and that which would most readily strike the eye. (3) Another reason may be suggested

why the north should be especially mentioned, because an enemy approaching like the Assyrians, would obtain their first view of the city on that side.

3. HATH MADE HIMSELF KNOWN especially by the great act of deliverance recently accomplished, a description of which immediately follows.

4. There follows, in a few lines, a striking picture of the advance of the hostile army, and of its sudden destruction. Compare with this the wonderfully graphic description of the same march in Is. x. 28—34.

THE KINGS. The mention of "kings" in the plural does not prove that the Psalm cannot be referred to the Assyrian invasion. They were perhaps satraps, or petty kings (comp. Judges v. 3, 19), dependent upon Sennacherib. In his Annals, as lately deciphered, he speaks of setting up tributary kings or viceroys in Chaldæa, Phœnicia, and Philistia, after conquering those countries.

WERE ASSEMBLED. The word is used of a niter confederation, as of the Canaanite kings, Josh. xi. 5.

THEY PASSED BY TOGETHER : spoken of the marching of an army in battle array. Comp. Is. x. 29, &c. But it might also be rendered, "They vanished, disappeared at once, or altogether." For this meaning of the verb see xxxvii. 36. If so, this verse expresses in its two clauses, briefly, the gathering and the destruction of the host, and then these two ideas are expanded in what follows.

5. THEY, SAW (IT), viz. the Holy City. The force of the descrip-

- They were terrified, they hasted away.  
 6 Trembling took hold upon them there,  
   Pangs as upon a woman in travail :  
 7 (They were broken as) with the east wind  
   Which breaketh the ships of Tarshish.  
 8 As we have heard, so have we seen  
   In the city of Jehovah of Hosts, in the city of  
     our God ;  
   God will establish it for ever. [Selah.]
- 9 We have thought, O God, on Thy loving-kindness  
   In the midst of Thy temple.

tion in this verse, as in the last, is much increased by the way in which the verbs follow one another without a copula. Calvin well illustrates it by Cæsar's *veni, vidi, vici*. A succession of scenes is thus flashed upon the eye. Each word is a picture. First, we have the mustering of the hosts ; then their march ; then their first sight of the city ; then their astonishment, their dismay, their wild panic and flight.

6, 7. This confusion and terror are now further portrayed under two images : the first, that of a travailing woman, a common one in the Old Testament, and found also in the New ; and the second, in which the defeat of Sennacherib's army is compared to the wreck and dispersion of a navy in a storm. The image in this case is presented with lyric vividness, as if the sacred Poet were himself looking on the scene. It is a comparison, without any particle of comparison to introduce it.

For the image, as descriptive of the irresistible power of God, compare Is. xxvii. 8, Amos. iv. 9, Jonah iv. 8, Jer. xviii. 17, and see 1 Kings x. 22, where ships of Tarshish denote the strongest and largest ships. Comp. the "afflavit

Deus, et dissipantur" of our own history. In Is. xxxiii. the Assyrian power is also compared to a gallant ship.

8. This marvellous deliverance is but a fresh proof, in our own experience, of that wonder-working Love which in the days of old has so often manifested itself in Israel. The things which our fathers have told us, we have now witnessed with our own eyes. (Comp. xlv. 1.) And therefore, also, the present is regarded as a pledge for the future : "God will establish it—make it stand firm—for ever," as lxxxvii. 5.

9—14. The next portion of the Psalm consists of the grateful celebration of that which God had done for Zion.

9. WE HAVE THOUGHT, *i.e.* pondered, considered in that deep, still, heartfelt gratitude, whence issue the loud praises of the tongue. IN THY TEMPLE, either as the place in which the congregation met to acknowledge God's loving-kindness, or as the place in which He had *manifested* His loving-kindness. Calvin : "locum ubi invocaretur sedem virtutis et gloriæ suæ fore."



10 As is Thy Name, O God, so is Thy praise to the ends  
of the earth !

Full of righteousness is Thy right hand.

11 Let the mountain of Zion be glad,  
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice,  
Because of Thy judgements.

12 Compass Zion, and go round about her ;  
Tell the towers thereof,

13 Consider her bulwarks, mark well her palaces,  
That ye may tell it to the generations following.

14 For such is God, our God, for ever and ever ;

10. AS IS THY NAME, SO IS, or, as others, "So let Thy praise be," *i.e.* Mayest Thou be praised according to the greatness of Thy Name, God's Name being here that Name which He had got Himself in Israel, by His manifold mighty acts on their behalf.

11. The verbs may either be taken as optatives, as above, or as simple presents. "The mountain of Zion rejoices," &c. Comp. xcvi. 8.

THE DAUGHTERS OF JUDAH, not here literally "the maidens of Judah," though it was usual for these to take a prominent part in the celebration of every victory, with songs and dances ; but, as the parallelism with "the mountain of Zion" would indicate, the various cities and villages of Judah which had suffered from the invasion. The metaphor is common in prose as well as in poetry.

12. The glad sense of freedom, the shout of deliverance, are no less noticeable in this verse than the strong patriotic feeling which breathes in it.

The horrors of the siege are at an end. No hostile army lies before the walls, and shuts the besieged within the gates. Therefore it is that the sacred Poet, kindling with emotion, as he looks with all the pride and all the

deep affection of a true patriot on the towers of Zion, which still stand in their beauty, unscathed by the spoiler's hand, calls upon all her inhabitants to go forth, now that they can do so freely, to look upon her beauty, to gaze with affection upon her bulwarks, to consider one by one her palaces.

13. CONSIDER. The word occurs only here, lit. "divide," *i.e.* mark them one by one, in a poetical and a figurative sense, answering to the "tell her towers" before.

Still, in thus calling on them to admire the material glory of their city, the Poet would not have them do so only that they may take pride in her strength and her stateliness, but that they may tell to generations to come who that God is whose Hand has saved her.

14. FOR SUCH IS GOD, or, "for this is," &c.

It is interesting to compare with these words of the Jewish Poet a similar burst of patriotic sentiment from the lips of a Grecian orator : Καὶ οἶδε μὲν, says Pericles, τοιοῦδε ἐγένετο τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς χρηὶ ασφαλεστέραν μὲν εὐχεσθαι, ἀτολμοτέραν δὲ μηδὲν ἀξιούν τήν ἐς τοὺς πολέμους διάνοιαν ἔχειν, σκοποῦντας μὴ λόγῳ μόνῳ τὴν ὠφελίαν . . . ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον

He will be our Guide unto death.

τὴν τῆς πόλεως δύναμιν καθ' ἡμέραν ἔργῳ θεωμέρους καὶ ἔραστὰς γιγνομένους αὐτῆς, κ.τ.λ. It is needless to observe how exactly these last words correspond to those of the Psalmist : "Consider her bulwarks," &c. Indeed, Arnold, in his note on the passage in Thucydides (ii. 43), well observes, that "the words ἔργῳ θεωμέρους might furnish matter for an oration or a poem. They mean, 'Look at our temples and the statues which embellish them ; go down to Piræus, observe the long walls, visit the arsenals, and the docks of our three hundred ships ; frequent our theatres, and appreciate the surpassing excellence of our poets, and the taste and splendour of our scenic representations ; walk through the markets,

observe them filled with the productions of every part of the world ; and listen to the sounds of so many dialects and foreign languages, which strike your ears in the streets of our city, the resort of the whole world.'" But with the strong love of country, with the same enthusiastic admiration of her present grandeur, the same fond recollection of her glory in times past, there is a very striking difference of spirit. The Greek thinks only of the men who achieved that glory, and who embellished the city of their birth. and whose right hand gave them the victory ; the Jew traces all the glory of his land, and all the success of her children, immediately to God. With the one all is of man, with the other all is of God.

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## PSALM XLIX.

THIS Psalm is not inaptly described in the ancient Latin Version of the Psalms (published with the Anglo-Saxon Paraphrase by Thorpe) as, *Vox Ecclesiæ super Lazaro et divite purpurato*. It is designed as a vindication of the ways of God in sight of the different fortunes of the righteous and the wicked in this world. It is no mere commonplace on the shortness of life and the uncertainty of riches. It is no philosophical dissertation, which bids us bear up bravely in our perils and sufferings, telling us that virtue is its own reward. It goes at once to the root of the matter. It shows us not only the vanity of riches, but the end of those who "boast themselves in their riches." It comforts the righteous in their oppression and affliction, not merely by the assurance that they shall finally triumph over the wicked, but by the more glorious hope of life everlasting with God. Here is the

true ground of consolation, that God will not only not forsake those who trust in Him in this life, but that He will take them to Himself. It is this doctrine specially enunciated, which gives the Psalm its distinctive character, and which leads the Psalmist himself to claim for it so attentive a hearing.

The Psalm consists of three parts :—

I. First : An Introduction, in which the whole world is called upon to listen to the words of the Poet, and in which he further declares that he speaks by Divine inspiration. Ver. 1—4.

Then follows the main body of the Poem, in two principal divisions, marked by the refrain, which closes each. Ver. 5—12, and ver. 13—20.

II. The former of these contains, generally, a description of men prosperous and rich, whose riches puff them up with pride, and with the foolish imagination that they can secure for themselves an immortality upon earth ; but who are so far from being able to save themselves or others from death by their riches, that they are no better than the beasts that perish. Ver. 5—12.

III. The remainder of the Psalm deals chiefly with the consolation to be derived from the end of the righteous, as contrasted with the end of the worldly. Ver. 13—20.

Others divide the Psalm differently, and consider ver. 5—15 to contain one consecutive piece of instruction as to the several lots of the worldly and the faithful ; and ver. 16—20, the application of the instruction, by way of consolation, to those who are in suffering and poverty, and to whom the prosperity of these men is a stumbling-block.

It should be remarked, that the rich men of the Psalm are not described as “the wicked,” “the ungodly,” “the violent,” &c., as in other Psalms. Only one hint is given in the word “iniquity” (ver. 5), that they are evil men. But this seems to be designed, as in our Lord’s parable of the rich man and Lazarus, to show that the selfish, proud, boastful use of riches, the mere luxuriousness of wealth, apart from violence or unscrupulousness of conduct, is evil, and finds its end in the outer darkness.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. OF THE SONS OF KORAH.\* A PSALM.]

- 1 HEAR ye this, all ye peoples,  
Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world,
- 2 Both low and high,  
Rich and poor together !
- 3 My mouth shall speak wisdom,  
And the meditation of my heart shall be understanding ;
- 4 I will incline mine ear to a parable,  
I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

1—4. Introduction and announcement of the Psalmist's purpose.

The opening is solemn and formal, like that of the Prophets. Comp. Micah i. 2, 1 Kings xxii. 28, with Deut. xxxii. 1, Is. i. 2, Ps. l. 1.

1. THE WORLD ; the term here used is that which indicates its temporary, fleeting character : see xvii. 14, note. Two things are implied in this verse ; first, that the doctrine of the Psalm concerns all ; and next, that it is one which men are apt to neglect, and to the consideration of which, therefore, they need to be roused.

2. LOW AND HIGH, lit. sons of (common) men, and sons of (great) men. RICH AND POOR, between whom the instruction of the Psalm is divided, its lessons being a warning to the one, and a consolation to the other.

4. I WILL INCLINE MINE EAR, as one who listens patiently for the Divine revelation. The inspiration of the Poet, as well as that of the Prophet, is from above. He cannot speak of his own heart ; he must hear what God the Lord will say. The *inclining* of the ear is the act significant of ready obedience on the part of man ;

the *revealing* or uncovering the ear (as it were, by drawing away the long hair which hung over it) denotes the imparting of supernatural knowledge, heavenly wisdom, and the like, on the part of God, Is. l. 5. Similarly, Wordsworth, speaking of a maiden whose soul is filled, and whose very features are moulded by the inspiration caught from the world of Nature :

“ . . . she shall *lean her ear*  
In many a secret place,  
Where rivulets dance their wayward  
round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face.”

Diodati supposes that the metaphor is borrowed from musicians, who incline the ear when they tune their instruments, in order to ascertain that each note is true. It is because he has thus listened to receive a message from above, that the Poet can call upon all nations to hear him. He who would be a true teacher of the things of God must first incline his ear to hear, before he can open his lips to speak.

A PARABLE, a truth cast in a

\* See note on the Inscription of Psalm lxxxiv.

- 5 Why should I fear in the days of evil,  
 When iniquity at my heels compasseth me about?  
 6 They that trust in their wealth,  
 And in the greatness of their riches make their  
 boast,  
 7 None (of them) can by any means redeem another,  
 Nor give to God a ransom for him,—  
 8 And precious is the redemption of their soul,  
 And it must be let alone for ever,—  
 9 That he should still live continually,  
 That he should not see the grave.  
 10 For he must see it :  
 Wise men must die ;

weighty, sententious form ; as a RID-  
 DLE is one clothed in metaphor, &c.  
 Comp. lxxviii. 2, Prov. i. 6. Both  
 words, however, are used of profound  
 and important truths. The very ex-  
 pression, "I will open," shows that  
 it is not the design of the Poet to  
 express himself in a dark, obscure  
 manner.

5. WHY SHOULD I FEAR. The  
 consolatory result at which he has  
 arrived, after looking at the world,  
 and weighing in the balance those  
 whose fortune seems fair and prospe-  
 rous, is placed first, before he tells the  
 tale, as in xxxvii. 1, lxxiii. 1.

THE DAYS OF EVIL, not merely a  
 time of misfortune, as the parallelism  
 shows, but the time in which evil men  
 bear sway.

WHEN INIQUITY, &c. lit. "when  
 the iniquity of my heels compasseth  
 me about." Comp. xlv. 15, "the  
 shame of my face covereth me," in-  
 stead of "shame covereth my face."

Or, perhaps, Iniquity is supposed  
 to be lying, like a serpent in his path,  
 ready to fasten on the heel, as the  
 most exposed and vulnerable part.

7. ANOTHER, lit. "a brother," the  
 word, however, being employed in the  
 widest sense, as in Lev. xxv. 48, and

often. The sentiment is expressed in  
 its most general form, but with a  
 tacit opposition. Man cannot redeem  
 man from death : God only can do  
 this.

8. SOUL, *i.e.* as is evident from the  
 whole scope of the context here, "life."  
 It is much to be regretted that super-  
 ficial readers of the Psalm so often  
 give a totally false meaning to this and  
 the preceding verse. The passage has  
 been alleged to prove that our Lord,  
 as the Redeemer of man, must be God  
 as well as man. The doctrine is most  
 true, but it is not in the Psalm, nor is  
 there the remotest allusion to it. All  
 that is here taught is, that no wealth  
 can save a man from death, because  
 the life of men is not in their own  
 hands, or in that of their fellows, but  
 only in the hand of God, who cannot  
 be bribed. There is a kind of solemn  
 irony in the idea of the richest of men  
 offering all his riches to God, to es-  
 cape death.

9. THAT HE SHOULD LIVE. This  
 is dependent on the last clause of ver.  
 7, "Nor give to God a ransom for  
 him, that he should live," &c., verse  
 8 being parenthetical.

10. WISE MEN, not simply mean-  
 ing that their wisdom cannot save

Together the fool and the brutish person must perish,  
And leave their wealth for others.

11 Their inward thought is that their houses shall be for ever,

Their dwelling-places to many generations :  
They call (their) lands after their own names.

12 But man, being in honour, abideth not,  
He is like to the beasts that are destroyed.

13 This their way is their folly,  
And after them men approve their sayings. [Selah.]

14 Like sheep they are gathered to the unseen world ;  
Death is their shepherd :

them, but that their utmost wisdom will not lead them to make so profitable a use of their wealth, as thereby to escape the grave. DIE . . . . PERISH : the words seem purposely chosen to denote the end respectively of the *wise* and the *brutish*.

11. AFTER THEIR OWN NAMES. Thus hoping to build for themselves an immortality upon earth.

12. IN HONOUR. These words belong to the subject "man," not to the verb following. Man (being) in honour, notwithstanding all the magnificence of his position and his wealth, abideth not,—lit. does not pass the night, is not so secure in his position even as a wayfarer, who turns in for a night's lodging at the inn.

ARE DESTROYED, lit. "are reduced to silence," the eternal silence of death.

13. This verse is evidently closely connected with ver. 11, and hence Hupfeld would transpose it with ver.

12. It is, as he says, naturally connected by the train of thought with ver. 11, and indeed carries on and completes the picture, by showing how these rich men have their example followed even after their death. The very expression, "*This* their way," &c., is a summing up of what had been just said. And the *Selah*, stand-

ing as it now does, at the end of ver. 13, instead of standing, as it naturally would, after the refrain, ver. 12, seems to intimate that there has been some disarrangement.

THIS THEIR WAY. Both the meaning and the construction of this clause are doubtful. It may mean (1) "This their way (*i.e.* manner of life, course of conduct) is their folly:" or (2) "This their prosperous condition is (or becomes) their infatuation (blind confidence)."

APPROVE THEIR SAYINGS, lit. "find pleasure in their mouth." Their example and their words survive them. Their maxims are the maxims which find favour and currency in the world. Ewald carries on the construction from the previous verse :

"This is the way of those who have folly,  
And of those after them who delight to speak in like manner."

14. A further description of the end of these rich fools. They perish like cattle (ver. 12) : they are laid in the grave ; they descend to Hades (*Shēol*, the world of spirits), and there they are like a flock of sheep, with Death for their shepherd, their beauty and their glory gone.

IS THEIR SHEPHERD, *i.e.* feeds

—And the upright have dominion over them in the morning,—

And their beauty shall the unseen world consume,  
That it have no more dwelling-place.

15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the unseen world:

For He shall take me. [Selah.]

them (not feeds *on* them, as the E. V.), tends them. They have been like a flock fed to the full in fat pastures during the day: they are now like a flock which the shepherd, when night comes, puts into the fold.

HAVE DOMINION, or, have trampled upon them, putting their feet, as it were, upon the neck of prostrate foes. Stated as a past fact, because the destruction of the wicked is also regarded as already accomplished.

IN THE MORNING. Apparently the morning of deliverance is meant, after the night of misery and suffering which they have experienced at the hand of their oppressors. Some expositors understand it of the morning of the resurrection, and the kingdom and dominion which the saints shall then share with Christ. But see on ver. 15.

15. The lot of the righteous is now contrasted with that of the wicked, but with a personal application to the Psalmist himself, "God shall redeem my soul."

BUT, or, "only," as an exception to the general lot of men, such as those before described.

FROM THE POWER OF THE UNSEEN WORLD, lit. "from the hand of Shēōl," *i.e.* the grave and Hades.

FOR HE SHALL TAKE ME. This short half-verse is the more weighty, from its very shortness.

We have, then, in this passage again (comp. xvi. 11, xvii. 15), the strong hope of eternal life with God, if not the hope of a resurrection. In the preceding verse, in the very midst of the gloomy picture which he draws

of the end of the ungodly, there breaks forth one morning-ray of light, the bright anticipation of the final triumph of the good over the evil. This is the inextinguishable hope which animates the Church of the Old Testament, as well as that of the New. Righteousness *shall* eventually, must in its very nature, reign upon the earth. The wicked shall find their end in Shēōl (see ix. 17), and the righteous shall trample on their graves. This, and not more than this, seems to have been the meaning originally of the Psalmist, in the words, "And the righteous have dominion over them in the morning." But now that he comes to speak of himself, and his own personal relation to God, he rises into a higher strain. He who knows and loves God has the life of God, and can never perish. That life must survive even the shock of death. "God," says the Psalmist, "shall redeem my soul from the hand of Hades, for He shall take me," as He took Enoch, and as He took Elijah to Himself. We are not, of course, to suppose that the Sacred Poet himself expected to be taken up alive to heaven; but those great facts of former ages were God's witnesses to man of his immortality, and of the reality of a life with Him beyond this world. It is a hope based on facts like these which here shines forth. It is a hope, not a revealed certainty. It rests on no distinct promise: it has not assumed the definite form of a doctrine. But it was enough to raise, to cheer, to encourage those who saw ungodliness

- 16 Be not thou afraid when a man groweth rich,  
 When the glory of his house is increased :  
 17 For when he dieth he can take nothing (away with him),  
 His glory cannot descend after him :  
 18 For though he blesseth his soul while he liveth,  
 —And men praise thee when thou doest good to  
 thyself—  
 19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers,  
 Who nevermore see the light.  
 20 Man, being in honour, and having no understanding,  
 Is like to the beasts that are destroyed.

prospering in this world. The end of the wicked, after all, was a thick darkness which had never been penetrated ; the end of the righteous, life with God. (See the same contrast in xvii. 15, and note there.)

16. Having encouraged himself with this hope, he now turns to encourage others.

18. BLESSETH HIS SOUL, *i.e.* pronounces himself a happy man. Comp. Deut. xxix. 19, "blesseth himself in his heart," and the address of the rich man to his soul, Luke xii. 19, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years."

19. HE SHALL GO. According to the present text, "*it* shall go," *i.e.* the soul (ver. 18), which is the only subject, if the verb here is in the 3d pers. fem. Some expositors, however,

alleging that such an expression is not used of the *soul*, would take the verb here as 2d pers. masc., "thou shalt go," as if the rich man were addressed : but this involves the exceeding harshness of a return, immediately after, to the 3d pers., "*Thou* shalt go to the generation of *his* fathers."

20. The Psalm concludes with the refrain, as at ver. 12, but with the alteration of one word. Instead of "abideth not," we have now, "and hath no understanding," or rather as a sort of adverbial clause, "and without understanding." There is consequently a fresh idea here. There the statement is, that men in general are like dumb cattle ; here, that only if they possess not the true wisdom, they perish like the brutes.

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## PSALM L.

THIS Psalm furnishes us with no evidence as to the time of its composition, but in elegance and sublimity of language, in force and dignity, it is worthy of the best days of Hebrew poetry. It is a



magnificent exposition of the true nature of that service and worship which God requires from man. It rebukes the folly which thinks that religion is a matter of sacrifices and gifts, and declares that obedience and thanksgiving are the true fulfilling of the Law. It condemns alike a prevalent formalism and a prevalent hypocrisy. How needful it was to insist upon such truths we learn from the whole history of Israel, and the perpetual and indignant remonstrances of the Prophets. The tendency to substitute the outward act for the inward, the sacrifices of bulls and goats for the sacrifice of thanksgiving, was deeply ingrained in the nation, till at last it ossified in Pharisaism, and wore its most hideous aspect on that day of solemn Passover, when the sacrifices of the Law were offered by those whose hands were stained with the greatest crime which the world has seen.

The Psalm thus inculcates at length the same doctrine which we find in briefer lines in Psalms xl. 6—8, li. 17, lxix. 30, &c., and which is implied in xv. and xxiv. 1—6. In its general tone and character it is essentially prophetic. It consists of three principal parts :—

I. A magnificent exordium, in which the whole scene of judgement is described. As formerly, at the *giving* of the Law on Sinai, so now God is represented as appearing in Zion for *the explanation* of it, and for judgement against its transgressors. Ver. 1—6.

II. From His judgement-seat God solemnly rebukes the errors and delusions which prevailed as to the nature of His service. He reminds His people of the peculiar relation in which they stand to Him, and asks if they can believe that sacrifices, merely as sacrifices, can be of any value to Him who has all creatures at His command. Thanksgiving and prayer are the sacrifices in which He delights, and these will best avail in the day of trouble. Ver. 7—15.

III. But there were those in Israel who not only exalted the outward service unduly, but who made its punctual observance a cloke for, and a makeweight against, their iniquity. The first evil, indeed, of superstitious formalism, naturally engendered this still deadlier evil of conscious hypocrisy. Against this, sentence is now pronounced ; and again the truth, already enunciated, is repeated, that the love of a grateful heart is the sacrifice which is truly pleasing to God. Ver. 16—23.

[A PSALM OF ASAPH.\*]

- I. 1 THE God of gods, Jehovah, hath spoken,  
 And called the earth, from the rising of the sun to  
 the setting thereof.  
 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,  
 God hath shined.  
 3 Our God cometh, and surely will not keep silence !  
 A fire devoureth before Him,  
 And round about Him a tempest rages :

1—6. The Psalm opens with a description of God's coming to judge His people. He comes now to Zion, as once He came to Sinai. He comes with all the gloom and terrors of thunder, and lightning, and storm. He summons before His judgement-seat those whom He has taken into covenant with Himself ; and at the same time as exercising universal dominion, He calls heaven and earth to be His witnesses against them.

1. THE GOD OF GODS. This is, there can be no doubt, the proper rendering of the words, *El Elohim*. These three names of God occur in the same way in Josh. xxii. 22, where they are twice repeated. This is the only use of the name Jehovah in the Psalm, which is in accordance with the general Elohistic character of the second Book ; but the adjunct, "God of gods," is certainly remarkable.

The peculiar use of the Divine Names in the Psalms, and in the historical Books, is however too large a question to be satisfactorily discussed in a note.

THE EARTH, as afterwards "the heaven and the earth," are summoned as witnesses of the solemn act of judgement, and as lending grandeur to the whole awful scene—borrowed, as Is. i. 2, from Deut. xxxii. 1.

2. THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY. Comp. xlviii. 2. The same expression is applied to Zion also in Lament. ii. 15. Zion would be so called, as possessing the Sanctuary, whether Tabernacle or Temple.

HATH SHINED. Comp. lxxx. 1, Deut. xxxiii. 2.

3. God is seen coming, the devouring fire and the mighty tempest being the accompaniments of His Presence, and the symbols of the judgement

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\* This is the first Psalm, and the only one in this Book, ascribed to Asaph. In the Third Book of the Psalter, eleven Psalms, lxxiii.—lxxxiii., have his name prefixed to them. He was one of the three choir-leaders or chief singers appointed under the direction of David to preside over his great choral company of Levites, the other two being Heman and Ethan (or Jeduthun). Comp. 1 Chron. xv. 16 &c. with xxv. 1, &c. Their special instruments of music were cymbals of brass, 1 Chron. xv. 19, with which, and with harps and psalteries, they were said to prophesy, xxv. 1. On the occasion of bringing up the Ark to Jerusalem, David delivered "To Asaph and his brethren" the Psalm which had been composed to celebrate that event, 1 Chron. xvi. 7 ; and in the division of the Levitical services which became necessary, as the tabernacle still remained at Gibeon, Asaph and his company were selected "to minister before the Ark of Jehovah, and to record, and to thank and praise Jehovah the God of Israel," 1 Chron. xvi. 4, 5. In later times, Asaph was ranked with David as one of the famous singers of Israel. Comp. Neh. xii. 46, with 2 Chron. xxix. 30.

- 4 He calls to the heavens from above,  
 And to the earth that He may judge His people.  
 5 "Gather My beloved together unto Me;  
 They that have made a covenant with Me by  
 sacrifice."  
 6 And the heavens have declared His righteousness,  
 For God is Judge Himself. [Selah.]
- II. 7 "Hear, O my people, and I will speak;  
 O Israel, and I will testify unto thee;  
 God, (even) thy God, (am) I.  
 8 Not because of thy sacrifices do I reprove thee,  
 Yea, thy burnt-offerings (have been) always before Me.

which He will execute. See the more elaborate working out of the same image in xviii. 7—15. Comp. xcvi. 2—6.

A TEMPEST RAGES, lit. "it is tempestuous exceedingly."

5. All nature having been summoned as witness to the awful scene, God now speaks.

GATHER, &c. To whom are these words addressed? Many suppose, to the angels, as the ministers of God's will. But it is unnecessary to make the expression more definite than it is in the Psalm.

MY BELOVED, not "my *saints*," as E. V., but "those who have obtained favour, grace, in My sight," or as is explained in the parallel, "those whom I have taken into covenant with Myself." See note on xvi. 10. God has made Himself known to Israel: He has given them His Law and His Covenant: and He comes now to judge them, to see whether they have kept His Law, whether they have been faithful to His Covenant.

BY SACRIFICE, lit. "upon sacrifice," as that by means of which the covenant was sealed, Exod. xxiv. 8.

6. FOR GOD IS JUDGE. God is now about to act as Judge Himself.

7. Then judgement opens. The whole nation is called before the bar of its Judge, who is "God" (the God of the world), and "thy God" (the God of Israel).

AND I WILL SPEAK, or, "that I may speak," and in the next clause "that I may testify."

TESTIFY AGAINST THEE, or perhaps "conjure thee," "solemnly warn thee."

GOD, (EVEN) THY GOD, in an Elohistic Psalm, instead of "Jehovah, thy God," (see xlv. 7, with reference probably to the Mosaic formula, as at the beginning of the Decalogue, Exod. xx. 2). Compare the shorter formula, "I am Jehovah," Ex. vi. 2, 6—8, which is so often repeated in the solemn enactment of different laws in the Book of Leviticus. It is the utterance both of the Lawgiver and of the Judge.

8. The reason for this act of judgement is given. First, negatively. It is not because the people had neglected the externals of the Law, or had forgotten to offer the sacrifices appointed by the Law. They had brought them; but they had brought them as if the act were everything, and as if the meaning of the act, and the spirit in which it was done, were nothing.

- 9 I would not take out of thine house a bullock,  
Nor he-goats out of thy folds ;  
10 For Mine is every beast of the forest,  
(And) the cattle upon the mountains by thousands.  
11 I know every bird of the mountains,  
And that which moveth in the field is with Me.  
12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee ;  
For Mine is the world and the fulness thereof.  
13 Should I eat the flesh of bulls,  
Or drink the blood of he-goats ?  
14 Sacrifice unto God thanksgiving,  
And pay thy vows to the Most High ;  
15 And call upon Me in the day of trouble,  
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

But God demands no service for its own sake, but only as the expression of an obedient will. A thankful heart is more than all burnt-offerings.

The Prophets are full of the like sentiments. Thus, in Isaiah, God expostulates, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams," &c. (i. 12; compare also lviii. and lxvi. 3). Micah asks, "Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams?" &c. (vi. 6—8). Hosea testifies, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." And so deep-rooted was this tendency in the people to exaggerate the importance of the dead work, to bring the sacrifice of the dumb animal instead of the sacrifice of the heart, that Jeremiah carries the opposition between sacrifice and obedience even to the extreme of a paradox. "For I spake not unto your fathers, and I commanded them not, in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offering and sacrifice; but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hear My voice," &c. (vii. 22, 23).

SACRIFICES, *i.e.* peace-offerings, often joined with BURNT-OFFERINGS, as li. 16. See also xl. 6, the two being mentioned probably as representing and including all manner of sacrifices.

The following verses, 9—13, are in a strain of lofty irony, in which the gross stupidity which could suppose that the flesh and blood of the victims were of themselves acceptable to God, is finely exposed.

10. CATTLE. The word is most commonly used of *tame* animals, but here generally of large herds of grazing cattle.

BY THOUSANDS, lit. "on the mountains of a thousand," *i.e.* where a thousand are; or, where they are by thousands.

14. There follows now, positively, what God requires. The sacrifices which He would have are thanksgiving, and the prayer of faith in the time of trouble. Comp. li. 17.

Under the name of *thanksgiving* and *prayer* all the rest of religion is comprehended.

THY VOWS. Comp. cxvi. 13.

- III. 16 But unto the wicked saith God :  
 “What hast thou to do to tell My statutes,  
 And that thou hast taken My covenant into thy  
 mouth ?  
 17 Whereas for thee—thou hatest instruction,  
 And hast cast My words behind thee ;  
 18 When thou sawest a thief—thou foundest pleasure  
 in him,  
 And with adulterers (has been) thy portion ;  
 19 Thy mouth thou hast let loose in wickedness,  
 And thy tongue frameth deceit ;  
 20 Thou sittest (and) speakest against thy brother,  
 Against thy mother’s son thou utterest slander.  
 21 These things thou hast done, and (because) I kept  
 silence

16. The former part of the Divine sentence was directed against those who attached undue importance to the external acts of religion. What follows is directed against those who make use of the outward observances of religion as a mask and cloke under which they may hide their iniquities. First, formalists, and next, hypocrites are condemned. With this and the following verses, comp. Rom. ii. 17—24.

TO TELL, *i.e.* “to number,” “to count up,” as if with a view to their more punctual observance.

17. WHEREAS FOR THEE. The pronoun is emphatic, and is thus placed, to mark the strong contrast between such a character and the Law which he professes to understand. Comp. Is. i. 15.

18. FOUNDEST PLEASURE IN HIM, *i.e.* in his society ; in intercourse with him, &c. Comp. Job xxxiv. 9. The transgression of three commandments of the Decalogue is specified, in the same way as in Rom. ii. 17, &c. by way of example.

19. FRAMETH, lit. “weaveth.”

20. THOU SITTEST, *i.e.* in company with others who slander and speak evil. (See i. 1.)

THY MOTHER’S SON, stronger than “thy brother,” and intended to mark the *unnatural* blackness of such conduct.

UTTEREST SLANDER. (The noun occurs only here), the LXX. render “puttest a stumbling-block,” but the other sense suits the parallelism better.

21. And because the sinner is allowed to go on long unpunished, he waxes confident by his impunity, and imagines that God is like himself, and that good and evil are things indifferent ; not that he *says* so in words, but his conduct shows his ignorance both of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of the truth and righteousness of God.

KEPT SILENCE, *i.e.* did not manifest My abhorrence of sin by signal vengeance on the ungodly.

But the long-suffering of God cannot always be abused. The time comes when the sinner is made to feel that God is a righteous Judge.

Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one like thyself ;

(But) I will reprove thee, and set all (the matter) in order before thine eyes."

- 22 Consider, now, this, O ye that forget God,  
Lest I tear (you), and there be none to deliver.
- 23 Whoso sacrificeth thanksgiving glorifieth me,  
And whoso prepareth (his) way,  
I will show him the salvation of God.

I WILL SET IN ORDER—the whole sin in all its evil course, its poisonous root, and its deadly branches, shall be put before the man. The sin that he did and would not look at, God shall make him look upon. The sin which he thought he could hide from God, or which, with strange infatuation, he supposed God took no notice of, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

23. This third great division of the Psalm concludes with the assertion of the same truth as the second. The lesson of the Psalm for all who pervert the Law of God, whether to purposes of superstition or hypocrisy, is the same : God desires the heart and the will of man as the true sacrifice.

SACRIFICETH THANKSGIVING, as above, ver. 14. The verb is designedly employed, in order to mark the nature of the *sacrifice* which God will have : slay not victims, bring not animals, but bring thanksgiving as sacrifices. The E.V. with its rendering, "*Offereth* praise," loses sight of the distinct reference to the Mosaic sacrifices, which are not indeed absolutely superseded—the time had not yet come for this—but are put in their true place. The very great prominence again given to thanksgiving is worthy of our careful notice. There is no duty so commonly forgotten. God showers down His benefits upon us with both hands, large and free, and we receive them as a matter of

course, and never consider Whose Love has bestowed them : and thus, in our unthankfulness, we rob God of His honour.

Further, as thanksgiving is thus dwelt upon because it is so commonly forgotten, so it is also put as the sum of religion because it, in fact, includes all else. Faith, and prayer, and self-denial, and the endurance of the cross, and all holy exercises, are, as Calvin observes, comprised in this one grace. For it is by faith only that we are sensible of God's goodness ; therefore he who is truly of a thankful spirit has faith ; he who is thankful triumphs over his earthly trials : he who is thankful is accomplishing man's highest end, inasmuch as in all things he gives glory to God.

The instruction of the Psalm abides : it has not lost its force. The sacraments and ordinances of the Christian Church may become to us, what sacrifice and offering were to the Jews, a mere OUTWARD FORM ; a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet have no love ; a man may be punctual in his attendance at all holy ordinances, and yet cherish iniquity in his heart, and, upon occasion, secretly practise it. Hence the Psalm is truly prophetic ; that is, universal in its character. It deals with "the sinners and the hypocrites in Zion," but it reaches to all men, in all places to the end of time.

## PSALM LI.

THIS Psalm is the expression of a deep and unfeigned repentance. It is a prayer, first, for forgiveness, with a humble confession of sinful deeds springing from a sinful nature as their bitter root ; and then for renewal and sanctification through the Holy Ghost ; together with vows of thankfulness for God's mercy to the sinner, and holy resolutions for the future.

It is the first of a series of Psalms, li.—lxv., which, in the Second Book of the Psalter, are ascribed to David ; and, according to the title, was written by him after his great sin, when the words of the Prophet Nathan roused his conscience from its uneasy slumber. Before that, we cannot doubt, remorse had been busy with him. Before that, he had felt his misery, had fought against it, but had refused to confess his sin. But the home-thrust, "Thou art the man," pierced him to the heart, and this Psalm is but the fuller record of the confession, "I have sinned," which the history mentions so briefly.

So profound a conviction of sin, so deep and unfeigned a penitence, so true a confession, a heart so tender, so contrite, a desire so fervent for renewal, a trust so humble, so filial in the forgiving love of God, are what we find nowhere else in the Old Testament, but what we might surely expect from "the man after God's own heart." This Psalm, indeed, and the 32nd, justify the title thus given him. In them we see the true man. Great as had been his sin, it was not the sin of a hardened nature, of the merely selfish sensualist, of the despot to whom all men were but as tools to minister to his pleasures and his crimes. And therefore, when the Prophet comes to him, he turns to God with a real sorrow, and God meets him, as the father in the parable meets his erring son, with a free forgiveness.

I see no ground for departing from the constant and reasonable belief of the Church, that the Psalm was written by David under the circumstances indicated in the title.

It consists of three principal divisions :—

I. The prayer for forgiveness. Ver. 1—8.

II. The prayer for renewal. Ver. 9—12.

III. The holy resolutions of one who has experienced the forgiving love and the sanctifying grace of God. Ver. 13—19.

The Psalm concludes with a prayer for Zion and the utterance of a hope that the time will come when God will be honoured with "sacrifices of righteousness." \*

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN NATHAN THE PROPHET CAME TO HIM AFTER HE HAD COME IN UNTO BATHSHEBA.]

I. I BE gracious unto me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness,  
According to the greatness of Thy tender mercies  
blot out my transgressions :

1, 2. The prayer for forgiveness.

I. ACCORDING TO THY LOVING-KINDNESS. In all godly sorrow there is hope. Sorrow without hope may be remorse or despair, but it is not repentance. Hence the true penitent always looks to the loving-kindness of God, even at the very time when he feels most deeply how he has sinned against it. The cry on his lips is "My Father," even when he confesses, "I am no more worthy to be called Thy son."

THE GREATNESS, &c. It is in this that David seeks the ground of forgiveness, not in himself. Comp. xxv. 6, 7. The deep sense of the *greatness* of his own sin makes him feel the need of a *great* mercy.

BLOT OUT. The forgiveness of sins is expressed by the use of two figures. The first, that of *blotting out*, "making that which is done as if it had not been done," is capable of two explanations: either (1) it refers to

*erasing* from a book or tablet what has been written therein, as Ex. xxxii. 32, Num. v. 23, comp. Ps. lxxix. 28, in which case sin must here be regarded as a *debt* entered against the debtor, and so cancelled by being blotted out; or (2) it may mean, in a more general sense, the *wiping away* of a thing, and so its entire removal, as in 2 Kings xxi. 13, it is said, "I will *wipe* (the same word as here) Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish." And in Is. xlv. 22, "I will blot out *as a cloud* thy sins," *i.e.* take them away as a cloud is swept away by the wind from the face of heaven.

MY TRANSGRESSIONS. The use of the plural has been variously explained. Some suppose that the several sins of adultery and murder are thus denoted. But this is too superficial a view. No sin ever stands alone: each single transgression is the mother of many transgressions: each is a root of bitterness whence

\* It is mentioned in the Life of Bishop Blomfield that he used this Psalm every night in addition to his other devotions.



- 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions,  
And my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against Thee—against Thee only have I sinned,

spring many bitter branches, so that we cannot confess one sin without confessing many.

On the various words used here and in the next verse, TRANSGRESSIONS . . . INIQUITY . . . SIN, see note on xxxii. 1.

2. WASH ME. This is the second figure employed to denote the working of God's forgiveness for which David prays. How is it to be understood? Does it refer only, like the first (the blotting out of sin), to the act of forgiveness, or does it denote the cleansing and purifying of the sinner's soul, the sanctification of the spirit?

So far as the figure itself is concerned, it might certainly be symbolical, as all outward washing was, of inward purification. On the other hand, the prayer here is for *forgiveness* of sins—that the burden of guilt may be taken away, and afterwards, in ver. 10 ff., comes the prayer for renewal and sanctification. The verb in the next clause also, “cleanse me,” though a word of more general use, is specially applied to the priest who “pronounces clean” the leper, a declarative act. Comp. Lev. xiii. 6, 34. But we must not expect in the O. T., and least of all in *prayer*, sharply defined and accurate statements of doctrine. Stier, who understands the “washing” here of sanctification, says, with perfect truth, that justification and sanctification, though distinct, are always closely connected in Scripture. God does not *declare* righteous without *making* righteous.

3. FOR. This particle expresses,

not the reason why God should forgive him, but the reason why *he asks* for forgiveness; namely, his own sense and acknowledgement of his sin. Those, however, who adopt the first sense, regard the confession of sin not as the meritorious cause of forgiveness, but rather as an indispensable condition (comp. xxxii. 5, Prov. xxviii. 13).

I KNOW. There is no need to render with the E. V. “I acknowledge,” though no doubt the *confession* of sin is implied. That however is not here prominent, but rather that discernment of sin and of its true nature which leads to a confession of it. In xxxii. 5, “I will confess unto Thee” is lit. “I will *make* Thee know.”

IS EVER BEFORE ME. Comp. xxxii. 3, 4. Luther says: “That is, my sin plagues me, gives me no rest, no peace; whether I eat or drink, sleep or wake, I am always in terror of God's wrath and judgement.” But surely here, not the terror of God's wrath and judgement, but the deep sorrow for despite done to God's love and goodness, is the feeling uppermost. David dreads not punishment, but separation from God.

4. Then follows an acknowledgement of the double evil of sin: first, in its aim, and next in its source; first, as done against God, and then as springing from a corrupt nature.

AGAINST THEE ONLY. How could this language come from the mouth of David, who had been guilty of sins which were so directly against *men* as well as against God? The sin against

And that which is evil in Thine eyes have I done :  
That Thou mayest be just when Thou speakest,

Bathsheba whom he had tempted, the sin against Uriah whom he had slain by the sword of another, the sin against his own family which he had polluted, and against his kingdom which he had weakened,—were not all these sins against men? They were. And yet he says, *Against Thee only have I sinned.* How are we to understand this?

First, the words are to be explained by David's *deep conviction* of sin as *sin*. For the moment all else is swallowed up in that. Face to face with God, he sees nothing else, can think of nothing else, but His presence forgotten, His holiness outraged, His love scorned. Therefore he must confess and be forgiven by God before he could even think of the wrong done to his neighbour.

But secondly, this deep feeling of the penitent heart, of the heart which loves God above all things, has its root in the very relation in which God stands to his creatures. All sin, *as sin*, is and must be against God. All wrong done to our neighbour is wrong done to one created in the image of God;\* all tempting of our neighbour to evil is taking the part of Satan against God, and, so far as in us lies, defeating God's good purpose of grace towards him. All wounding of another, whether in person or property, in body or soul, is a sin against the goodness of God. Hence the Apostle says (1 Cor. viii. 12), "But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." In like manner, all love to our neighbour is love to God whom we love in him. On this principle we shall be judged: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, ye have done it unto Me." It is not therefore

enough to explain these words of David, "*Against Thee only*," by saying that they are the expression of his *own deep sense* of his guilt and the dishonour done to God. That feeling rested upon the eternal truth of which it was the expression, a truth on which, as Hengstenberg observes, the Decalogue itself is based: "Thou must honour and love God in Himself, in those who represent Him on earth (Deut. v. 16), in all who bear His image. The love of God appears constantly in Deuteronomy, as the one thing which of necessity carries along with it the fulfilment of the whole Law; as for instance in chaps. xi. xii. Earlier still in Gen. ix. 6, the punishment of murder is grounded on this, that man bears God's image." "How must David have trembled," says the same commentator, "how must he have been seized with shame and grief, when he referred everything to God, when in Uriah he saw only the image of God, the Holy One, who deeply resented that injury,—the gracious and compassionate One, to whom he owed such infinitely rich benefits, who had lifted him up from the dust of humiliation, had so often delivered him, and had also given him the promise of so glorious a future!"

THAT THOU MAYEST. Strictly speaking, "in order that," which would imply that the sin was done in order that God's justice might shine the more conspicuously thereby; and this would seem of course to make God the author of sin.

But St. Paul, arguing upon this very passage in Rom. iii. 4, 5, refutes the possible perversion that men are at liberty to sin because thereby God's righteousness is commended. On the

\* "Defaced the image of the dear Redeemer."—Shakespeare. *Richard III*

(That) Thou mightest be pure when Thou judgest.

5 Behold, in iniquity I was brought forth,  
And in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Behold, Thou delightest in truth in the inward parts,

one hand it is clear that all, even sin itself, may be regarded as contemplated and comprised in the design of God ; and yet on the other, man is free, and sin is man's misdoing, and not God's doing. But, after all, there is perhaps no need to press the exact signification of the particle here.

WHEN THOU SPEAKEST, *i.e.* as is evident from the parallelism, "when Thou givest sentence."

WHEN THOU JUDGEST. This is the exact rendering of the Hebrew. St. Paul, Rom. iii. 4, does not quote from the Hebrew, but from the LXX. "When Thou art judged," *i.e.* when the justice of Thy dealings is called in question.

5. Sin is now regarded in its source. From my very earliest being, from the hour when I was conceived, sin has been with me. Sinfulness consists not merely in so many several sinful acts, but in a sinful and corrupt nature. The depth of the abyss of sin is here opened before the eyes of the penitent with a distinctness of which the instances are comparatively few in the O. T. (Comp., however, Job xiv. 4, Gen. viii. 21.) Manifestly not in extenuation, but in aggravation of his sin does David thus speak ("ad amplificandam malorum suorum gravitatem a peccato originali ducit exordium," Calvin). "He lays on himself the blame of a tainted nature, instead of that of a single fault : not a murder only, but of a murderous nature. 'Conceived in sin.' From first moments up till then, he saw sin—sin—sin : nothing but sin."—*Robertson*. Luther says : "If a man will speak and teach aright of sin, he must

consider it in its depth, and show from what *root* it and all that is godless springs, and not apply the term merely to sins that have been committed. For from this error, that men know not and understand not what sin is, arises the other error that they know not nor understand what grace is. . . . According to this Psalm then, we must say that all is sin which is born of father and mother, and from so evil a root nothing good can grow before God." And Calvin : "Here at length he confesses himself guilty, not of one sin only or of many, but he rises to the fountain-head, (acknowledging) that from his mother's womb he has brought nothing with him but sin, and that by nature he is altogether corrupt and as it were smeared over with vices. . . . And of a truth we do not thoroughly acknowledge our sins unless we condemn our whole nature as corrupt."

BEHOLD. The word is used to indicate the attainment of a new and higher knowledge (comp. Job iv. 18, xv. 15, xxv. 5), as if it had come with something of surprise on the mind, or were seen with a new brightness. The repetition of the word at the beginning of the next verse marks the connection and correlation of the two. On the one hand, lo ! I have seen sin as I never saw it before. On the other, lo ! I have learnt that truth is what Thou desirest in the secret heart.

6. TRUTH. Uprightness of heart : that very uprightiness and integrity which David and other of the O. T. saints assert elsewhere. but in which, now under deep conviction of his

And in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

- 7 Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean :  
 Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.  
 8 Thou shalt make me to hear joy and gladness,  
 (That) the bones which Thou hast crushed may exult.

sinfulness, he feels himself to be so deficient.

7. THOU SHALT PURGE ME. The use of the future here, as well as the meaning of the verb, has been most happily explained by Donne in his Sermon on this verse (Sermon lxii.) : "How soon and to what a height came David here? He makes his petition, his first petition, with that confidence, as that it hath scarce the nature of a petition : for it is in the original : *Thou wilt purge me, Thou wilt wash me*, Thou hadst a gracious will and purpose to do it, before Thou didst infuse the will and the desire in me to petition it. Nay, this word may well be translated not only *Thou wilt*, but by the other denotation of the future, *Thou shalt, Thou shalt purge me, Thou shalt wash me*; Lord, I do but remember Thee of Thy debt, of that which Thy gracious promise hath made Thy debt, to show mercy to every penitent sinner. And then, as the word implies confidence and acceleration, infallibility and expedition too, that as soon as I can ask I am sure to be heard; so does it imply a totality, an entireness, a fulness in the work; for the root of the word is *peccare*, to sin, for purging is a purging of peccant humours; but in this conjugation [the Piel] . . . it hath a privative signification; . . . and if in our language that were a word in use, it might be translated, Thou shalt un-sin me." I am sorry that want of space prevents my quoting the beautiful passage in the same sermon, in which Donne dwells on

the truth that *God* Himself alone can thus purge the sinner, *Domine Tu*. It will be found in vol. iii. p. 91 of Alford's edition of the Works.

WITH HYSSOP. In allusion to the purification enjoined by the Mosaic ritual of the leper (Lev. xiv. 4 ff.) and those who had defiled themselves by contact with a dead body (Num. xix. 6 ff. 18 ff.), the hyssop being dipped in the blood of the bird which had been killed, and so used to sprinkle the person who was to be cleansed. This is certainly a remarkable instance of the manner in which the symbolism of the Mosaic Law was understood by a pious Jew. David evidently sees that the outward purification is a sign of a better cleansing; another proof of that profound spiritual insight which throughout the Psalm is so striking, and which almost justifies St. Augustine's saying, *Sunt quibus expedit cadere*.

THOU SHALT WASH ME. Again in allusion to a further ceremony of purification enjoined by the Law, the washing, namely, of the clothes, and the bathing of the body of the defiled person. WHITER THAN SNOW. Comp. Is. i. 18.

8. THOU SHALT MAKE ME TO HEAR: not said with reference to God's announcement of forgiveness by the Prophet Nathan, or as made in His word, but rather with reference to those public festivals in which the whole congregation would unite in praising God, and in which David hoped now, as a forgiven sinner, to take his own part. He would be one

- II. 9 Hide Thy face from my sins,  
 And blot out all my iniquities.  
 10 Create for me a clean heart, O God,  
 And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
 11 Cast me not away from Thy presence,  
 And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

of those who, with a heart full of thankfulness, would openly testify that thankfulness.

THE BONES : not merely, as Hupfeld says, instead of the heart, but as constituting the strength and framework of the body, the crushing of the bones being a very strong figure, denoting the most complete prostration mental and bodily : see vi. 2.

9. The second division of the Psalm begins here with the renewed prayer for forgiveness. From the confident assurance of the last two verses, that God would do that which he asked, David now passes to earnest pleading with God. This is surely what is to be found in all true prayer ; it will be marked by fluctuations of feeling ; its order will be the order of need, not the order of the intellect. Again, David asks for forgiveness first, and then for renewal.

HIDE THY FACE, *i.e.*, Thy face of wrath ; do not look upon them in anger, or so as to bring me into judgement. In the more common use of the phrase, God is said to "hide His face" in displeasure, the face of God generally signifying His favour.

10. After the prayer for forgiveness there follows now the prayer for renewal and sanctification.

A CLEAN HEART, as the necessary condition of communion with God. Comp. xxiv. 4 and Matt. v. 8.

CREATE. A word always used strictly of the creative power of God. The whole spiritual being of the man had, as it were, fallen into a chaos. The pure heart and the childlike

feeling of confidence could only return as a new creation. Comp. Ephes. ii. 10, iv. 24. With this prayer compare the promise in Jer. xxiv. 7 ; Ezek. xi. 19, xxxvi. 26.

A STEADFAST SPIRIT ; one, that is, firm in faith, not easily swayed hither and thither through its own weakness or by blasts of temptation, and therefore also firm and constant in obedience.

11. CAST ME NOT AWAY. Stier sees an allusion partly to the exclusion of the leper from the congregation (Lev. xiii. 46), and partly to the rejection of Saul (1 Sam. xvi. 13, 14) ; but the expressions employed in both cases are different. The phrase, as it occurs 2 Kings xiii. 23, xvii. 20, xxiv. 20, Jer. vii. 15, refers to the rejection of the nation of Israel from the favour of God.

TAKE NOT THY HOLY SPIRIT FROM ME. Calvin infers from this that the Spirit had not been altogether taken away from David, and hence draws the consolatory conclusion, that the faith of the elect cannot finally fail. The Lutherans, on the other hand, supposing a total loss, and deeming a total renewal necessary, insert the word "again,"—"Take not (again) Thy Holy Spirit from me." But the words do not justify either interpretation. The petition expresses rather the holy fear of the man who has his eyes open to the depth and iniquity of sin, lest at any moment he should be left without the succour of that Divine Spirit, who was the only source in

12 Restore unto me the gladness of Thy salvation,  
And uphold me (with) a willing spirit.

III. 13 So will I teach transgressors Thy ways,  
And sinners shall return unto Thee.

him of every good thought, of every earnest desire, of every constant resolution. It is the cry of one who knows, as he never knew before, the weakness of his own nature, and the strength of temptation, and the need of Divine help; and to whom therefore nothing seems so dreadful as that God should withdraw His Spirit. At the same time we need not hesitate to admit, that such a prayer in the lips of David could not mean all that it means now to a Christian. David could hardly have understood by the Holy Spirit a Divine Person, nor could he have been made partaker of the Spirit in the same sense that Christians are: for not till Jesus was glorified was the Spirit given in all His light and power, in all His quickening, sanctifying grace. But we see in such prayers how marvelously the words of Scripture are adapted to our necessities; how, used at first as it were by children, they still express the maturest feelings of our Christian manhood, and, as in this instance, have even become permanently fixed in our Christian liturgies.

12. The first clause of the verse again puts, as a petition, that which in ver. 8 is the utterance of a confident hope and trust.

WITH A WILLING SPIRIT, or, "a free spirit." Comp. Ex. xxxv. 5, 22, "willing of heart." The word meaning "noble," in Hebrew, and the use of the word as a subst. "a prince," are apparently derived from this. The LXX. render "with a princely spirit." The expression here, as well as the similar expression in ver. 10,

"a steadfast spirit," refers *immediately* to the spirit of man, but to that spirit as influenced and guided by the Spirit of God. So the passage is paraphrased in the "*Christian Year*" (6th Sunday after Trinity):

"With that free Spirit blest,  
Who to the contrite can dispense  
The princely heart of innocence."

Luther somewhere strikingly illustrates this close and intimate union of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man, by saying that the latter, under the influence of the former, is like water heated by fire.

13. With a conscience set free from guilt, with a heart renewed by the Spirit of God, and full of thankfulness for God's great mercy, he cannot keep silent, but will seek to turn other sinners to God. The 32d Psalm, which was probably written after this (see Introduction to that Psalm), shows us how this resolution was kept.

SO WILL I TEACH, or, "So let me teach." The form is optative, and expresses that which he desires to do, as an evidence of his gratitude, and as knowing how greatly his sin must have been a stumblingblock to others. Terrible had been the fruit of his sin, not only in the wasting of his own soul, but in the injury done to others. Terrible was his punishment in witnessing this; and therefore the more anxious is he, though he cannot undo his own sin, to heal the breach, and repair the evil of sin in other souls.

THY WAYS, *i.e.* the ways of God's commandments, in which He would have men walk. Comp. xviii. 21.

- 14 Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of  
my salvation ;  
My tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.  
15 O Lord, open Thou my lips,  
And my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.  
16 For Thou delightest not in sacrifice, else would I give it ;  
(In) burnt-offering Thou hast no pleasure :  
17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,  
A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not  
despise.  
18 Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion ;

14. BLOOD-GUILTINESS ; literally, "bloods," the plural of this word being used to denote blood *shed*, murder. Comp. Gen. iv. 10, "The voice of thy brother's blood," &c. Here, too, the blood of Uriah, whom he had slain, seems to cry against David for punishment. See 2 Sam. xi. 15.

THY RIGHTEOUSNESS. Why is this attribute of God especially mentioned as the subject of praise? Because the righteousness of God is that attribute according to which He gives to every one his own, to those who with repentance and faith turn to Him, the forgiveness which they ask, and which He has *promised* to bestow. Hence St. John says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and *just* (or *righteous*) to forgive us our sins."

15. OPEN MY LIPS. His lips had been sealed by sin, but God, by His free forgiveness, would give him fresh cause of rejoicing, and so would open them. Calvin comp. xl. 3, where the Psalmist says that God had put a new song in his mouth. David thus prays God to be gracious, that he may be the loud herald of that grace to others, "My mouth shall declare," &c.

16. FOR, as expressing the reason why he will offer to God the *spiritual* offering of thanksgiving, a grateful heart and grateful lips.

SACRIFICE . . . BURNT-OFFERING. In what sense God is said to reject them is clear from xl. 6, l. 8, where see notes. The Rabbinical interpreters suppose *sin-offerings* to be meant, and think that these are here set aside because for a sin like David's, done with a high hand, no sacrifice, but only repentance, could avail. But the words here employed in reference to sacrifices are never used of sin-offerings, but always of *thank-offerings*, and this sense is plainly required by the context.

17. THE SACRIFICES OF GOD, *i.e.* those in which He really has pleasure, are A BROKEN HEART. Another evidence of a deep sense of sin, and of a tender conscience. When speaking of *thankfulness*, we might have expected him to say, "a *joyful* heart, or a thankful heart ;" but instead of that he says, "a contrite heart." For the joy of forgiveness does not banish sorrow and contrition for sin : this will still continue. And the deeper the sense of sin, and the truer the sorrow for it, the more heartfelt also will be the thankfulness for pardon and reconciliation. The tender, humble, broken heart, is therefore the best thank-offering.

18, 19. The Psalm concludes with a prayer (not as before for the individual) for the nation at large.

Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

- 19 Then Thou shalt delight in sacrifices of righteousness,  
In burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering ;  
Then shall they offer up bullocks upon Thine altar.

It seems probable that the two concluding verses were added shortly after the return from exile, a time when every effort was made to rouse the people whose heart had grown cold to a sense of the value of the Temple services, and the appointed worship of Jehovah. On this point I have said more in a article on the

Prophet Zechariah, in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*.

19. SACRIFICES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, *i.e.* such as God would accept, because offered in righteousness, from a heart right with God, and not merely in external compliance with the Law. See note on iv. 5.

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## PSALM LII.

THIS Psalm is not a prayer or complaint addressed to God against the oppression of the wicked ; it is a stern upbraiding addressed to the man who, unscrupulous in the exercise of his power, and proud of his wealth (ver. 7,) finds his delight in all the arts of the practised liar. It is a lofty challenge, a defiance conceived in the spirit of David when he went forth to meet the champion of Gath. The calm courage of faith breathes in every word. There is no fear, no trembling, no doubt, as to the end which will come upon the tyrant. How vain is his boast in presence of the loving-kindness of God, which protects His people ; in presence of the power of God, which uproots the oppressor ! Such is briefly the purport of the Psalm. Whether it was really composed by David on the occasion to which the title refers it, may be a matter of doubt. We know too little of Doeg to be able to say if the description in verses 1—4 applies to him or not. Nor, in fact, does the title intimate that he is the subject of the Psalm. It only points out the occasion on which the



Psalm was written, and Saul's name is mentioned in it as well as Doeg's.

Whilst, therefore, the faith and courage which breathe in this Psalm are such as to incline me to think that it was written by David, and whilst there may even be an allusion, in ver. 8, to the sanctuary at Nob, I see little reason on other grounds for maintaining the accuracy of the inscription.

The Psalm scarcely admits of any formal strophical division, but the arrangement is clear and natural.

The first verse states briefly the subject of the whole: the folly, namely, of boasting in wickedness when God's loving-kindness is the sure and abiding defence of those against whom that wickedness is directed. Then follow:—

First, a description of the evil-doer, who, in this instance, is portrayed as an habitual and practised liar. Ver. 2—4.

Next, a denouncing of God's judgement against him. Ver. 5.

Then the exultation of the righteous at his overthrow. Ver. 6, 7. And lastly, the confidence and security of the Sacred Poet himself, and his thankfulness to God for His goodness to him. Ver. 8, 9.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A MASKIL OF DAVID, WHEN DOEG THE EDMITE CAME AND TOLD SAUL, AND SAID TO HIM, DAVID CAME INTO THE HOUSE OF AHIMELECH.]

I WHY boasteth thou thyself in wickedness, O mighty man?—

The loving-kindness of God (endureth) continually.

I. O MIGHTY MAN. So the E.V., whilst the Prayer-book Version has, more pointedly, "O tyrant," and the LXX. *ὁ δυνατὸς ἀνθρώπων*. The word evidently occurs here in a bad sense; though this is the only instance of such usage. Elsewhere it is used of a hero, of one who shows his prowess and his valour in war, &c. With

this "boasting" (see x. 3) of the mighty man there is then put in brief but forcible contrast the "loving-kindness of God," as that in which the Psalmist himself found his hope and confidence, and that which indeed rendered all such boasting vain.

CONTINUALLY, lit. "all the day," as xlii. 3, xliv. 8.

- 2 Destruction doth thy tongue devise,  
 Like a sharp razor, working guile.  
 3 Thou lovest evil rather than good,  
 Falsehood rather than to speak righteousness. [Selah.]  
 4 Thou lovest all devouring words,  
 O thou deceitful tongue!  
 5 God also shall break thee down for ever,  
 He shall seize thee, and pluck thee out of (thy)  
 tent,  
 And root thee out of the land of the living. [Selah.]  
 6 And (the) righteous shall see (it) and fear,  
 And over him shall they laugh (saying):

2—4. It is remarkable that there follows, not the description of the bold bad man, ruling all around him by brute force, and crushing others into submission at his will, but that of one who gains his evil end by means chiefly of unblushing, deliberate falsehood.

2. DESTRUCTION: properly, “a yawning gulf,” as in v. 9, the plural form, of which the singular occurs in ver. 7, in a different signification, “evil desire.”

LIKE A SHARP RAZOR. Similarly, in other passages, the tongue is compared to a sharp sword, spears and arrows, &c.

3. RIGHTEOUSNESS, here opposed to FALSEHOOD, because by this, not only *speaking* the lie, but false *conduct* is meant, the opposite of which, therefore, is not *truth* merely, but *righteousness*.

4. DEVOURING WORDS: literally, “words of swallowing up,” which accords exactly with the figures employed in v. 9, “their mouth is a yawning gulf,” &c.

5. Now comes, in short and powerful contrast to the unscrupulous violence, deceit, and falsehood of the proud oppressor, the righteous judgement of God. The most forcible

expressions are employed to describe his utter overthrow and uprooting.

ALSO, *i.e.* “in like manner,” “as thou hast done, so shall it be done to thee.” The law of the Divine dealings is the law of retribution.

BREAK THEE DOWN, *i.e.* as a house is broken to pieces and laid in ruins.

SEIZE THEE: properly, as coals are taken with the tongs or the shovel.

OUT OF (THY) TENT. Some suppose the herdsman’s tent of Doeg to be meant: others, the Tabernacle; as if the phrase, “to pluck or tear away from the Tabernacle,” were equivalent to “destroying from the congregation,” &c.

6. SHALL SEE (IT) AND FEAR. They shall witness it with that solemn awe which must be felt by all who understand aright the judgements of God. But mingled with this fear there will be joy, — joy that the wicked one is overthrown, joy that God has executed His righteous judgement.

OVER HIM, over the wicked man thus cast down, THEY SHALL LAUGH. Such exultation, to our modern sensibilities, seems shocking, because we can hardly conceive of it, apart from the gratification of personal vindictive-

- 7 Behold the man, who maketh not God his stronghold,  
 But hath trusted in the greatness of his riches,  
 (And) is strong in his evil desire.
- 8 But as for me,—(I am) like a green olive-tree, in the  
 house of God ;  
 I have trusted in the loving-kindness of God, (and  
 will do so) for ever and ever.
- 9 I will give Thee thanks for ever, for Thou hast done (it).

ness. But there is such a thing as a righteous hatred, as a righteous scorn. There is such a thing as a shout of righteous joy at the downfall of the tyrant and the oppressor, at the triumph of righteousness and truth over wrong and falsehood. This is very different from imprecating the judgement of God on the heads of the ungodly. No such imprecation occurs in this Psalm, nor is there in it any trace of personal animosity. The explanation, therefore, which has been given in the notes on xxxv. 22, xli. 10, does not apply here. Indeed, even in the New Testament, we find exultation at the overthrow of proud and luxurious wickedness. "Rejoice over her," it is said, at the fall of Babylon, as seen in the Apocalypse, "thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her," Rev. xviii. 20. See also xix. 1—3, where the same strain of holy triumph is repeated.

There is a manifest difference between such a strain of sentiment, and the expression of a merely personal hatred. A *malicious* joy over a prostrate foe is condemned in direct terms in the Old Testament. See Prov. xxiv. 17, Job xxxi. 29, and compare 2 Sam. i. 19 ff.

7. The words in which the righteous express their triumph, pointing, as it were, to the fallen oppressor, and the lesson to be learnt from his overthrow. His trust was in his

riches (comp. xlix. 6, Prov. x. 15, xviii. 11), and his strength and his evil desire (see note on ver. 2), not in God.

8. In strong contrast to such a man is the character and the hope of the Psalmist himself. The tyrant shall be like a tree rooted up (ver. 5); I, he says, shall be like a tree ever green and ever flourishing. Both images are common in the Psalms. Comp. i. 3, xxxvii. 35, xlv. 2, cxxviii. 3, and especially xcii. 12, 13. The olive-tree is here specially selected as a type of gladness and fruitfulness; comp. Jer. xi. 16. Hupfeld finds the figure perplexing, because he says no trees grew even in the courts of the Temple. But not to mention that trees may have been planted in the Temple area (see on xcii. 13), there is no need, surely, to put such an interpretation upon the words. The olive is not said to be *in the house of God*, any more than in the use of a similar figure in cxxviii. 3, the olive-plants are supposed to be round about the table. Just as there it is said, "Thy children about thy table are like olive-plants," so here: "I, in the house of God, am like an olive," *i.e.* whilst permitted daily access to His sanctuary and presence, I may compare myself to that tree which, in its greenness and fruitfulness, is an apt emblem of joy. This is obviously the form of the comparison, as in fact is indicated by the accents.

9. THOU HAST DONE. Abolutely,

And I will wait on Thy name, for it is good,  
In the presence of Thy beloved.

as in xxii. 31, xxxvii. 5; the past tense, expressing the *conviction* of faith that his prayer has already been answered.

THY BELOVED. See xvi. 10, and note there; and for the vow of a *public* thanksgiving, xxii. 25.

## PSALM LIII.

THIS Psalm is only another version of the Fourteenth Psalm, from which it differs in two particulars. First, in its use of the Name of God, which here is Elohim instead of Jehovah, a peculiarity which is characteristic of all the Psalms in the Second Book. Next, in the remarkable deviation, ver 5, from the language of the parallel passage, ver. 5, 6, of Psalm xiv. This deviation is remarkable, because whilst there is a material difference in the *sense* of the two passages, very many of the same or similar *letters* occur in both. It appears to me almost certain that Ps. xiv. is the original, and that probably a later poet may have, by making slight alterations, adapted it to the circumstances of his own time.

The introduction and notes to Psalm xiv. may be consulted here. In some few instances only, where it seemed desirable, additional notes have been introduced, and especially where this text differs from the other.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. UPON MACHALATH.\* A MASKIL OF DAVID.]

1 THE fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

\* The meaning of this word is uncertain (see title also of Psalm lxxxviii.). From the addition of a word in this latter Psalm signifying "to sing," and from the meaning of the word MACHALATH itself, we may presume that the two Psalms were to be sung in a sad, mournful tone.

- Corrupt and abominable are they in (their) iniquity.  
 There is none that doeth good.
- 2 God hath looked down from heaven upon the children  
 of men,  
 To see if there is any that hath understanding,  
 That seeketh after God.
- 3 Every one of them is gone back, together they have  
 become corrupt,  
 There is none that doeth good, no not one.
- 4 "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge,  
 (Who) eat my people (as though) they ate bread,  
 (And) call not upon God?"
- 5 There were they in great terror, (where) no terror was,

1. CORRUPT, &c. Lit. "They have corrupted and made abominable."

3. THEY HAVE BECOME CORRUPT. A different verb from that employed in ver. 1, and one therefore for which a different equivalent should be found in our language; perhaps "tainted" would convey the idea. It is used strictly of *physical* corruption (the Arabic cognate being used of milk which turns sour), but here, as in Job xv. 16, transferred to moral corruption.

4. WHO EAT, &c. These words are very difficult, and are again capable of a different interpretation from that given in the note on xiv. As is there said, the literal rendering is, "Eating my people, they have eaten bread, they have not called on Jehovah." This may be explained, "Whilst they devour my people (comp. Jer. x. 25, Lam. ii. 16), they have eaten bread, &c., *i.e.* in the midst of their cruel destruction of Israel, they have gone on in their brutal security, eating and drinking, quite regardless of God, or of any reverence for His name."

I am now inclined, however, to

refer the words, "Who eat my people," to the first member of the verse: "Have the workers of iniquity, who devour my people, no knowledge? They eat bread (they live their careless life of self-enjoyment), they call not upon Jehovah (do not acknowledge or fear Him)."

5. THERE, as if pointing to the scene; see on lxvi. 6.

WHERE NO TERROR WAS. These words are not in Ps. xiv. and are somewhat difficult to explain. Do they mean, No terror *within*, or no terror *without*? Taken with what follows, and supposing the Psalm to have been adapted to some such occasion as the destruction of Sennacherib's army, they might mean, "suddenly, in the midst of their proud security, when *they were free from all apprehension*, they were smitten with terror." Others understand it of *external* occasion of terror. They were seized with a sudden panic, where there was really *no object to occasion alarm*. The words may perhaps be a later gloss. As we do not know for what occasion the alteration was made in the text, their interpretation must remain obscure.

For God hath scattered the bones of him that  
encampeth (against) thee.

Thou hast put (them) to shame; for God hath rejected  
them.

6 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!  
When God bringeth back the captivity of His people,  
(Then) shall Jacob exult, (then) may Israel be glad.

HATH SCATTERED, *i.e.* on the field  
of battle, or around the walls of the  
city, there to whiten in the sun and

rain (comp. cxli. 7, Ezek. vi. 5,  
Jer. viii. 2), instead of being in-  
terred.

## PSALM LIV.

THIS Psalm, like several others of the Psalms ascribed to David in the Second Book, refers, according to the title, to the time of his persecution by Saul. The particular occasion was this. David had taken refuge with six hundred men in the fastness of Keilah; but, warned by Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, that the men of Keilah were not to be trusted, he escaped into the wilderness of Ziph. Here, however, he was very near falling into the hands of the Ziphites, who would have betrayed him to Saul, when happily an irruption of the Philistines into the country compelled the king to desist from his pursuit, and to turn his arms in another direction. See 1 Sam. xxiii. 19, and the additional particulars furnished by the later annalist 1 Sam. xxvi. 1, from which sources the title is borrowed.

The language of the Psalm is, however, of so general a character, that it might have been composed under almost any circumstances of peril. Even the epithet "strangers" applied to the Psalmist's enemies, ver 3, does not necessarily refer to foreign enemies, as De Wette supposes. See note on the verse.

The Psalm consists of two principal divisions :—

I. A prayer to God to hear and to judge the cause of His servant together with the reason for this prayer in the violence and unscrupulousness of the enemies who beset him. Ver. 1—3.

II. The confident assurance that God will hear his prayer, and the promise and vow of thanksgiving for God's goodness which is thus anticipated. Ver. 4—7.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A MASKIL OF DAVID ; WHEN THE ZIPHITES CAME AND SAID TO SAUL, DOTH NOT DAVID HIDE HIMSELF WITH US?]

- 1 O GOD, by Thy Name save me,  
And in Thy might judge my cause.
- 2 O God, hear my prayer ;  
Give ear to the words of my mouth.
- 3 For strangers have risen up against me,  
And violent men have sought after my soul ;  
They have not set God before them. [Selah.]
- 4 Behold, God is my Helper,

1. BY THY NAME. See above on v. 11.

3. STRANGERS . . . . VIOLENT MEN. Supposing the inscription of the Psalm to be correct, the enemies thus spoken of would be the *Ziphites*. As they belonged to Judah, the word *strangers* seems to be used with special bitterness. But the epithet would seem still more applicable to the men of *Keilah*, whom David had rescued from the Philistines, and who so basely requited his generous assistance.

Their hostility to David probably was the result rather of a selfish regard to their own interests than of any affection or loyalty to Saul. They

could never have doubted on which side lay justice and right : but because they were wicked men, "who did not set God before them," they took pleasure in hunting down one whose only fault was that he was the king's enemy. The word "strangers" may mean only enemies, the idea of a foreigner, one of another country, passing over readily into the idea of an enemy, just as in Latin *hostis* meant originally nothing more than *hospes*. Here, however, the epithet may be employed to denote the savageness and cruelty of these men.

4. But though *men* were against him, David knew that God was with him.

- The Lord is the Upholder of my soul.  
 5 He will requite the evil to mine adversaries:  
 Destroy Thou them in Thy truth.  
 6 With free will will I sacrifice to Thee,  
 I will give thanks to Thy Name, O Jehovah, for it is  
 good.  
 7 For out of all distress hath He delivered me,  
 And mine eye hath seen (its desire) upon mine enemies.

THE UPHOLDER OF MY SOUL.  
 Not as in E.V., "with them that uphold my soul." For God is not to him one out of many helpers, but the only true helper.

6. WITH FREE WILL, or, with glad willing heart, as the expression occurs in Numb. xv. 3, and (without the preposition) in Hosea xiv. 4. This explains the motive of the sacrifice. The offering would be a literal offering, as appointed by the law, but it would be brought with all the cheerfulness and love of a thankful heart, not under the compulsion of a vow, or in mere slavish compliance to an established ritual.

THY NAME . . . FOR IT IS GOOD.  
 With reference to ver. 1, "By *Thy Name* save me."

It is possible that in the next verse the Name of God is the subject of the verb, so that we may render "He hath delivered me." If so, this passage (and Is. xxx. 27) would come very near the later Rabbinic usage, according to which "the Name" is constantly put for God Himself. The original passage is Lev. xxiv. 11.

7. The perfects in this verse denote not that the deliverance is already accomplished, but the confidence of faith that it will be, and give the reason for the thanksgiving of the preceding verse.

MINE EYE HATH SEEN. See note on xli. 10.

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## PSALM LV.

As this Psalm is, in the title, ascribed to David, and as it contains a bitter complaint of the faithlessness of a trusted friend, it has been commonly supposed to refer to the desertion and treachery of Ahithophel in Absalom's rebellion. We know too little of Ahithophel to be able to say whether he was the close personal friend of the



king, as well as his councillor of state. But the prayer of David, 2 Sam. xv. 31, when he was told that Ahithophel was among the conspirators, "O Lord, I pray Thee turn the counsel' of Ahithophel into foolishness," is very different from the general tone of this Psalm. Here throughout, there is a sense of personal wrong; the treachery is without excuse. But if Blunt is right in supposing that Bathsheba was the granddaughter of Ahithophel (*Undesigned Coincidences*, p. 147), and that he, in revenge for the insult to his family, had espoused the cause of Absalom, David could hardly complain of his desertion. His own conscience must have told him how well-merited it was. He could scarcely upbraid the man whom he had so wronged with treachery to himself, though he might pray that his counsel should not prosper. There is another objection to the view that Ahithophel is aimed at in the Psalm. The writer of the Psalm is evidently *in the city* (no doubt Jerusalem is meant, comp. ver. 14), surrounded by evil men, but especially cognisant of the perfidy of his trusted friend. If David, therefore, wrote the Psalm, he must have written it before he left Jerusalem, and the treachery of Ahithophel must have been already unmasked. But, according to 2 Sam. xv. 30, it was not till David had begun his flight that he was told that Ahithophel had joined the conspirators. The Psalm seems therefore, to have been composed under other circumstances, and to be directed at some person of whom we know nothing beyond what the Psalm itself tells us. Conjectures, after all, are of little value. One thing only is certain, and that is, that whoever the hollow friend may have been, who knew so well to cloke his treacherous designs,—who, with war in his heart, could use words smoother than oil,—his perfidy was very deeply felt, and very bitterly resented by the man who here records it. At one moment sadness, at another indignation prevails. In his sadness the Psalmist would flee away, and so escape the suffering and the recollection of his wrong. In his burning indignation at the black perfidy of which he had been made the victim, he would have the earth open her mouth and swallow up the faithless friend, together with all his accomplices.

The Psalm consists of three principal divisions :—

I. The first contains the earnest appeal to God against his enemies, the expression of his suffering, and the horror of mind which has come upon him together with the longing to escape from the

hostility to which he was exposed, and the evil he was compelled to witness. Ver. 1—8.

II. In the next his tone changes. The portentous wickedness which has filled the whole city, and worse even than this, the perfidy of the man he had trusted, rouse his indignation, and he prays that all the counsels of the wicked may be brought to naught, and that they themselves may go down alive into the grave. Ver. 9—15.

III. The last strophe is altogether in a calmer strain. It opens and closes with the confession of trust in God, and though the figure of the traitor again comes prominently into view, it does not provoke the same burning imprecation as before. Instead of this, the Psalmist rests calmly confident that the righteous shall never be moved, and that the bloodthirsty and deceitful man shall speedily be cut off. Ver. 16—23.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. ON STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A MASKIL OF DAVID.]

- I. 1 GIVE ear, O God, to my prayer,  
And hide not Thyself from my supplication.
- 2 Hearken unto me, and answer me ;  
I am tossed to and fro in my complaint, and must  
groan,
- 3 Because of the voice of the enemy,  
Because of the oppression of the wicked ;  
For they cast iniquity upon me,  
And in anger do they persecute me.
- 4 My heart is sore pained within me,  
And terrors of death have fallen upon me :
- 5 Fear and trembling come upon me,  
And horror hath overwhelmed me.

5. HORROR. The Hebrew word so rendered is of comparatively rare occurrence. It is to be found only in

three other places : Job xxi. 6, Is. xxi. 4, Ezek. vii. 18.

- 6 And I said : Oh that I had wings like the dove,  
 Then would I fly (away) and be at rest ;  
 7 Lo, then would I flee afar off,  
 I would lodge in the wilderness : [Selah.]  
 8 Quickly would I haste me to a place of shelter  
 From stormy wind (and) from tempest.

- II. 9 Confound, O Lord, divide their tongues ;  
 For I have seen violence and strife in the city :  
 10 Day and night, they go about it upon the walls  
 thereof ;  
 Iniquity also and mischief are in the midst of it.  
 11 Destruction is in the midst of it ;  
 Fraud and deceit depart not from the market-place  
 thereof.  
 12 For it is not an enemy that reproacheth me ;  
 Then I might bear it :

6. BE AT REST, lit. "dwell, abide," *i.e.* have some fixed and settled place of abode, where I should be free from persecution, instead of leading a wandering life, exposed to peril, and at the mercy of my enemies.

9. The tone of sadness and melancholy now gives way to one of hot and passionate indignation. He would have escaped if he could from that city of sinners, who vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their ungodly deeds ; but as he could not do this, he would gladly see God's judgements executed upon them. The sudden outburst of these fervent, impetuous feelings, gives an irregularity to the whole Poem. But this is natural ; and there is no need to suppose that its parts have been disarranged, and that the order should be restored by placing verses 12—14, and 20, 21, immediately after verse 5.

CONFOUND, or, "frustrate" (as in Is. xix. 3, "I will frustrate, or, bring

to naught, its counsel") ; lit. "swallow up."

DIVIDE. Comp. Gen. x. 25, xi. 1—9, to which there may possibly be an allusion.

10. THEY GO ABOUT, *i.e.* most probably "the wicked," mentioned ver. 3. The figure may perhaps be borrowed from sentinels keeping their watch upon the walls ; others think, from besiegers watching the walls in order to find some weak point. In the former case we must render "*upon*," in the latter "*round about* the walls." But neither figure need be pressed. The *walls* in this clause of the verse are parallel to *the interior* of the city in the next clause, so that the whole city may be represented in *all its parts* to be full of wickedness.

11. MARKET, or "broad place ;" the square or market-place near the gates, where was the general place of concourse. See on ix. 14.

12. FOR gives a special reason for

Neither is it one who hateth me, that hath magnified  
himself against me ;

Then I would hide myself from him.

13 But thou art a man, mine equal,

My companion, and my well-known friend ;

14 We were wont to take sweet counsel together,

To walk to the house of God among the thronging  
crowd.

15 Let death come suddenly upon them ;

Let them go down to the unseen world alive ;

For wickedness is in their dwelling, in the midst  
of them.

III. 16 As for me—unto God will I cry,

And Jehovah will save me :

17 Evening, and morning, and at noon will I complain  
and groan,

And He shall hear my voice.

the prayer in ver. 9, his eye falling upon one in particular among the crowd of enemies and evil-doers.

13. MINE EQUAL, lit. "According to my estimation," i.e. the estimation or worth which I put upon him. But such a sense does not apply here. It must rather mean "of the same rank and position as myself."

14. WE WERE WONT, &c. The verb is in the imperfect (or future, as it is commonly called). Lit. "we were wont to make (our) counsel, or confidential intercourse, sweet." The word which is here rendered "counsel," is rendered "secret" in xxv. 14, where see note. In both passages the meaning "close intimate intercourse" would be suitable.

THE CROWD, here the festal caravan ; comp. xlii. 4.

15. Again indignation at the blackness of this treachery, so far worse to be endured than any open enmity.

To have trusted, and to find his trust betrayed ; to have been one with a man in public and in private, bound to him by personal ties, and by the ties of religion, and then to find honour, faith, affection, all cast to the winds—this it was that seemed so terrible, this it was that called for the withering curse. Thus the second strophe ends as it began, ver. 9, with imprecations upon the wicked ; the intervening stanzas, in describing the faithlessness of the trusted friend, giving the reason for this anathema.

LET THEM GO DOWN. Comp. ix. 17. ALIVE, as Prov. i. 12. There may possibly be an allusion to the fate of Korah and his company. Numb. xvi. 30, &c.

16. AS FOR ME. The pronoun emphatic, in opposition to the conduct of his enemies.

17. EVENING AND MORNING, &c. The three principal parts of the day

- 18 He hath redeemed my soul, in peace, that they should  
not war upon me,  
For many were against me.
- 19 God shall hear (me) and humble them,  
—And He sitteth (as King) of old—[Selah.]  
The men who have no changes, and who fear not  
God.
- 20 He hath put forth his hands against them that were at  
peace with him :  
He hath profaned his covenant (that he made).
- 21 Smooth as butter itself is his mouth ;  
But his heart is war :  
Softer are his words than oil ;  
Yet are they drawn swords.

are mentioned, either as marking special times set apart for prayer, or as a poetical expression for "the whole day," "at all times," "without ceasing." Comp. v. 3 ; lxxxviii. 1, 13 ; xcii. 2.

COMPLAIN AND GROAN, the same words as in ver. 2.

18. IN PEACE, as denoting the end of the redemption, the condition in which he was placed thereby.

MANY. Perhaps more literally, With many (or, in great numbers) were they against me. But the prep. serves here, as elsewhere, to introduce the predicate. Comp. liv. 3.

19. An obscure verse. Who are they who have no changes? Apparently, those whom God is said to humble or chastise. And what is the meaning of the word "changes," as here used? Many understand it of a moral change; "who are without change of heart or reformation." But the word never occurs in this sense. It means, properly, "a change," in the sense of *succession*; as of gar-

ments, of troops relieving guard, servants leaving work, and the like. Hence it would rather mean in a moral sense: "They who have no cessation in their course (by being relieved guard, for instance), who always continue and persevere in their evil life."

20. The individual traitor (who had once been the trusted friend) is again prominent.

HIS COVENANT. Apparently not a particular covenant solemnly made, as that between David and Jonathan, but figuratively the covenant implied in a close friendship, of itself a holy bond, the breaking of which is a profanity.

21. SMOOTH, &c. Lit. "smooth are the butterinesses of his mouth," or as Ewald well renders, "Glatt sind die Butterlippen seines Mundes." His words drop from his lips like cream, or butter.

YET THEY. The pronoun is emphatic. *They*, those very words so smooth and so fair.

- 22 Cast thy burden upon Jehovah,  
 And He shall sustain thee :  
 He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
- 23 But Thou, O God, shall bring them down into the pit  
 of destruction :  
 Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half  
 their days ;  
 But as for me—I trust in Thee.

22. THY BURDEN. The word occurs only here. But there are similar expressions in xxxvii. 5, "thy way ;" and Prov. xvi. 3, "thy works." See also Ps. xxii. 10.—St. Peter, in 1 Pet. v. 7, evidently has

the rendering of the LXX. in his mind.

23. THEM, *i.e.* "the bloodthirsty and deceitful men" in the next clause, the pronoun being placed first as in many other instances. See on ix. 12.

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## PSALM LVI.

THE complaint of one who, though hard pressed by enemies, nevertheless trusts in God, rests in His promises, flees to Him for succour, and renders thanks for His mercy. Throughout, his confidence never forsakes him. Indeed we see here the victory rather than the struggle of Faith. Hence the refrain, with which the first and second parts conclude, "In God will I praise His word. . . . What can flesh (man) do unto me?"

According to the inscription, it was composed when David was detained in Gath by the Philistines. But on neither occasion when he visited Gath does the history inform us of any such detention. (1 Sam. xxi. 11—16, and xxvii.—xxix.) Hengstenberg, indeed, and Delitzsch suppose that some seizure or imprisonment is implied in the words he "feigned himself mad *in their hands*;" and the expression at the beginning of chap. xxii., "David therefore departed thence, and

*escaped* to the cave of Adullam," may imply that he had been subjected to some confinement. Hupfeld concludes from the absence of anything in the history corresponding to the title of the Psalm, that the title is not to be trusted. Yet it is perhaps more likely on this very account that it rests upon some ancient tradition. A modern compiler would have endeavoured to make the title square better with the history.

The Psalm falls naturally into three divisions :—

The first and second scarcely differ in their subject-matter. They each contain a cry for help against enemies, and an expression of confidence in God; the second, however, being somewhat more emphatic than the first. The first consists of ver. 1—4; the second of ver. 5—11. The Psalm then concludes (ver. 12, 13) with words of devout thankfulness.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. TO THE TUNE OF "THE SILENT DOVE IN FAR-OFF LANDS."\* A MIGHTAM OF DAVID, WHEN THE PHILISTINES LAID HOLD ON HIM IN GATH.]

1 BE gracious unto me, O God, for man would swallow me up :

All the day long he, fighting, oppresseth me.

2 Mine adversaries would swallow (me) up all the day long; For many are they that fight proudly against me.

3 In the day that I am afraid, in Thee do I put my trust.

1. MAN. The word used denotes man in his weakness and frailty as contrasted with God in His power and majesty.

2. WOULD SWALLOW ME UP, lit. Hath panted after me, with open mouth ready to devour me, like a wild beast, thirsting for my blood. The verb is repeated in the next

verse, but without any object expressed.

3. IN THE DAY, &c. Hupfeld thinks it a manifest contradiction to say, "In the day that I *fear* I *trust*;" but there is no contradiction except to the narrow understanding exercising its narrowest faculty of vision. It is not even necessary to explain :

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\* See Introduction, p. 7.

- 4 In God do I praise His Word:  
In God have I put my trust; I will not fear:  
What can flesh do unto me?

- 5 All the day long they wrest my words:  
All their thoughts are against me for evil.

"In the day when I have reason to fear, or when terror assails me," &c. Fear and trust may co-exist. Faith may vanquish the rising fear, or, with Peter sinking in the sea through fear of the winds and the waves, may only have strength to cry, Lord, save me, I perish. Trust in God does not make us cease to be men and to have the feelings of men; but it gives a better than any stoical calmness: it lifts the man who is trembling in himself above the fear which assails him; in the very midst of fear it listens to the voice which says, Fear not, for I am with thee. "Assuredly," says Calvin: "this is the true test and proof of our faith; when fears harass us, so far as our fleshy nature is concerned (*pro sensu carnis*), but do not overthrow and unsettle our minds. It seems, indeed, as if *fear* and *hope* were feelings too contrary the one to the other to dwell in the same heart; but experience shows that Hope there in fact really reigns where some portion of the heart is possessed by Fear. For when the mind is calm and tranquil, Hope is not exercised, yea rather is as it were hushed to sleep; but then, and not till then, does she put forth all her strength, when the mind has been cast down by cares and she lifts it up, when it has been saddened and disturbed and she calms it, when it has been smitten with fear and she sustains and props it."

4. IN GOD, or perhaps "*through God*" (comp. lx. 12), *i.e.* by His help, trusting in Him, do I praise.

HIS WORD, *i.e.* His promise. God Himself gives me to know ever anew the truth of His promise, and therefore I make my boast of it. The promise of God, true and precious as it is, is nothing in itself, but only in God, who makes it true and precious to our souls.

I WILL NOT FEAR, or "*I cannot fear*;" for such may be the force of the tense. "But how can David thus all at once have put off all weakness, so that he who but a moment before was in dread of death, now courageously tramples upon his enemies? I answer that this confidence is no proof that he was rid of all fear, as if he were like a man placed beyond the reach of every weapon (*extra telorum jactum positus*), and could quietly smile at all perils; but because he was so far from yielding to fear that he rose victoriously above it, and by holding up the shield of hope and so driving back all apprehensions was defended by a sure and certain salvation (*munitus esset certa salute*), he might well break forth with the holy boast, *Because I hope in God I will not fear.*"—*Calvin.*

5. The second strophe contains a fuller description of the attacks and evil designs of his enemies, and a cry to God to take vengeance upon them.

THEY WREST MY WORDS, *i.e.* they twist and pervert them, give them a wrong meaning, falsely misrepresent me. The expression, however, may perhaps be taken in a wider sense.



- 6 They gather together, they hide themselves, they, even  
they, watch my steps,  
As they have hoped (to take away) my life.  
7 Shall they escape because of iniquity ?  
In anger bring down the peoples, O God.  
8 THOU tellest my wandering ;  
O put Thou my tears into Thy bottle ;  
Are they not in Thy book ?

“My words” may be = “my circumstances :” all that concerns me, all that I say and do, they twist, turn it into an occasion of bitterness and sorrow to me.

6. THEY, EVEN THEY. The pronoun stands here emphatically.

MY STEPS, lit. “my heels,” the heels being the part exposed to any person coming from behind, or to an enemy lying like a serpent in the path. See on xlix. 5. Comp. lxxxix. 51 ; Job xviii. 9.

7. This verse gives vent to the stronger feelings of the heart, in the prayer that those who have banded themselves in a treacherous conspiracy against the peace and life of the Psalmist may be overthrown.

THE PEOPLE. Instead of saying “mine enemies,” his eye takes a wider range. These men are only a few out of many ungodly, and therefore he appeals to God as the Judge of the world to root out all ungodliness everywhere. Comp. lix. 5, 8, and see on vii. 7.

8. As in the last Psalm we noticed the sudden transition from sadness to anger, from a tone of weariness and despondency to one of stern indignation, so here we have the contrary. For a moment the Psalmist prays for destruction upon his adversaries ; then he turns, with words of touching entreaty, to God.

MY WANDERING, perhaps “my

flight, or exile.” Others understand, “my (inward) restlessness.” The word, however, may mean “complaint,” “lamentation,” &c. The word is in the singular number, perhaps, as Calvin suggests, in order to express “his old wandering life, as though he would term it one continuous exile.”

The tone here is changed. The Sacred Poet turns from man to God with that tender personal affection which is so striking both in this Psalm and in the next, and which makes one willing to believe that these are, as the titles tell us, Psalm of David. He knows that each day of his wandering, each nook in which he has found shelter, each step that he has taken, every artifice by which he has baffled his foes,—all have been numbered by his Heavenly Keeper. Yea, no tear that he has shed, when his eye has been raised to heaven in prayer, has fallen to the ground. God he prays to gather them all in His bottle, and trusts that He will note them in His book. Comp. cxxxix. 16, lxix. 28, Exod. xxxii. 32, Mal. iii. 16, in which the figure of the book occurs.

THE BOTTLE is the skin-bottle which in Eastern lands is used for keeping water, milk, wine, &c. In this he prays God by a bold figure to treasure his tears. The prayer is, no doubt, abrupt, coming as it does

- 9 Then shall mine enemies be turned backward, when I  
call (upon Thee) :  
This I know, that God is for me.
- 10 In God do I praise (His) word :  
In Jehovah do I praise (His) word.
- 11 In God have I put my trust ; I am not afraid :  
What can man do unto me ?
- 12 Upon me, O God, are Thy vows :  
I will pay thanksgivings unto Thee.
- 13 For Thou hast delivered my soul from Death :  
Hast Thou not (delivered also) my feet from stumbling,

between the double expression of confidence : "Thou hast numbered," &c. "Are they not," &c. But there is no reason on this account to render, "My tears *are put*," &c. Such a turn of the sentence may seem less harsh ; but I confess I cannot understand that kind of criticism which will allow no play to the emotions of the heart, and which would bind the spirit of prayer in the withes of the rhetoricians. This verse has been beautifully imitated in P. Gerhardt's Hymn (quoted by Hupfeld) :

"Du zählst wie oft ein Christe wein',  
Und was sein Kummer sei ;  
Kein stilles Thränlein ist so klein,  
Du hebst und legst es bei."

10. The refrain is varied from ver. 4, by the emphatic repetition of the first clause, with the substitution however in its repeated form of *Jehovah* for *Elohim*. Calvin thus explains the repetition : "Though to-day God may have seemed to depart from me, because He has withdrawn His aid, still I will rest in His word. Should

the same thing happen to-morrow, or the next day, I will persist in the same praise of it." He goes on to urge the importance of learning to be thus content with the bare word (*nudo verbo contenti*) in all our trials. "For though God ever furnishes believers with manifold subjects of praise and boasting in the benefits He bestows, still they can scarcely take three steps unless they have learned to lean only on the word."

12. THY VOWS, *i.e.* the vows which I have vowed to Thee. ARE UPON ME, *i.e.* it is incumbent upon me to pay them, because the condition of deliverance upon which I vowed has been fulfilled. Cf. Prov. vii. 14.

13. The verb from the first clause of this verse must be repeated with the second, where the change to the question ("Hast Thou not," &c.) is characteristic of the writer. See ver. 8.

FROM STUMBLING, *lit.* "from a thrust or blow."

THAT I MAY WALK, *lit.* "walk to and fro, as expressive of the general habit of the life."

That I may walk before God in the Light of Life?

IN THE LIGHT OF LIFE, or "in the light of the living," *i.e.* as a living man (as in Job xxxiii. 30).

Comp. xxvii. 13, and the parallel passage cxvi. 8, 9, where, however, it is "land of the living."

## PSALM LVII.

THIS Psalm is in many respects like the last, and, like that, was probably written by David.

Both Psalms open with the same cry to God for mercy; both are written in circumstances of no common peril (lvi. 1, 2, 5, 6, lvii. 4, 6); both are full of the same lofty trust in God, and courage in the midst of danger (lvi. 3, 4, 9—11, lvii. 1—3, 7), and of the same joy and thankfulness in the assurance of deliverance (lvi. 12, 13, lvii. 7—9). Both have even the same peculiar and characteristic expression by which the enemy is described as one ready to *swallow up* the Psalmist (lvi. 1, 2, and lvii. 3), and both have a double refrain at the conclusion of the two principal divisions of the Psalm. But this Psalm is written in a still more triumphant strain of holy confidence than the last, and closes with a shout of exultation.

According to the title, it was written by David "when he fled from Saul in the cave;" or as the LXX. render it, "*into* the cave." The history tells us of two occasions on which David found refuge in a cave. The one cave was that of Adullam, situate in the face of the cliffs which skirt the low valley of the Philistines, 1 Sam. xxii.; the other was that of En-gedi, one of the numerous caves in the limestone rock, among the "alps" or high pastures of the district on the western bank of the Dead Sea. Hengstenberg thinks the former is meant, because the connection between this and the preceding Psalm is so close, and because, being alike in character and form, and following one another in the Psalter, they may reasonably be referred to the same time. Now Psalm lvi. was written, according to the inscription,

in Gath, and therefore this was probably composed immediately afterwards when David hid himself in the cave of Adullam. Tholuck, on the other hand, decides for En-gedi. But this is a question which must be left. There is nothing in the Psalm either for or against the title.

The Psalm consists of two parts, the conclusion of each being marked by the refrain :—

I. The first contains a cry to God for mercy, together with an expression of confidence in Him in the midst of enemies and dangers. Ver. 1—5.

II. The second repeats briefly the story of his persecutions, and then concludes with a triumphant acknowledgement of God's goodness. Ver. 6—11.

[FOR THE FRECENTOR. "DESTROY NOT."\* A MIGHTY OF DAVID  
WHEN HE FLED FROM SAUL, IN THE CAVE.]

- I. 1 BE gracious unto me, O God, be gracious unto me,  
For in Thee hath my soul found refuge;  
And in the shadow of Thy wings will I find refuge,  
Until the destruction be overpast.
- 2 I will call upon God Most High,  
Upon the God who conferreth benefits upon me.
- 3 He shall send from Heaven and save me,

Ver. 1—5. The cleaving of the soul to God, and the trust in His power and mercy despite all perils.

I. IN THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS. This exceedingly striking image may have been suggested by Deut. xxxii.

II. See above on Ps. xvii. 8. Still more tender is the N. T. figure, Matt. xxiii. 37. Perhaps there is nothing

more remarkable in the Psalms than this ever-recurring expression of a tender personal affection on the part of the sacred Poet to God. There is no parallel to this in the whole range of heathen literature. Monsters to be feared and propitiated were the deities of paganism, but what heathen ever loved his god?

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\* See Introduction, p. 7.

- (Though) he that would swallow me up hath  
 reproached, [Selah]—  
 God shall send His loving-kindness and truth.  
 4 As for my life—in the midst of lions must I lie,  
 (Among) those who are ready to devour, even the  
 children of men,  
 Whose teeth are spears and arrows,  
 And their tongue a sharp sword.  
 5 Be Thou exalted above the heavens, O God,  
 (And) Thy glory above all the earth.

- II. 6 They prepared a net for my steps ;  
 My soul was bowed down.  
 They digged before me a pit ;  
 They fell into the midst thereof (themselves).  
 [Selah.]  
 7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast ;  
 I will sing and play (upon the harp).  
 8 Awake up, my glory ; awake harp, and lute ;  
 I will wake the morning-dawn.  
 9 I will praise Thee among the peoples, O LORD,  
 I will play unto Thee among the nations.  
 10 For great unto the heavens is Thy loving-kindness,  
 And unto the clouds Thy truth.

HE THAT WOULD SWALLOW ME UP. The same word which occurs in lvi. 1, 2, and one of the links connecting the two Psalms.

4. A SHARP SWORD. Cf. lv. 21, lix. 7, lxiv. 3, Prov. xxx. 14.

5. BE THOU EXALTED, i.e. *manifest* Thy glory and Thy majesty in the exercise of Thy universal dominion both in heaven and in earth. For this manifestation David prays ; that this will be, he rests assured, and this is his comfort when enemies assail. God's deliverance of those who trust in Him is bound up with His glory ; for the wicked strike not

only at the righteous, but at God Himself in them. The prayer, therefore, for God's exaltation is at the same time a prayer for his own deliverance, but it is—may we not say?—a less selfish and a nobler prayer.

7. MY HEART IS STEADFAST, i.e. in the confidence of faith. The adjective is the same as in li. 10.

8. I WILL WAKE THE MORNING-DAWN. The figure is at once bold and beautiful. My song shall itself awake the morning. Hengst. compares Ovid, *Met.* xi. 597 : "Non vigil ales ibi cristati cantibus oris Evocat auroram."

II Be Thou exalted above the heavens, O God,  
(And) Thy glory above all the earth.

II. "Greater words of prayer than these," says Delitzsch most truly, "never came from human lips. Heaven and earth have, as they imply, a mutually interwoven history, and the blessed, glorious end of this

is in the sunrise of the Divine glory over both."

The latter part of this Psalm is repeated at the beginning of cviii., where see notes.

## PSALM LVIII.

THIS Psalm is a bold protest against unrighteous judges. It opens with an indignant expostulation on their deliberate perversion of justice, whilst they pretend to uphold it. It lays bare their character and that of those whom they favour, as men thoroughly, habitually, by their very nature, corrupt. And finally, because they are thus beyond all hope of correction or amendment, it calls upon God to rob them of their power, and to bring all their counsels to naught.

The Psalm abounds in bold and striking images, and is remarkable for a nervous force of expression. The title ascribes it to David, but without assigning it to any particular occasion in his life. Various guesses have been made as to the time of its composition, but the Psalm furnishes us with no data for any certain or even probable conclusion.

It consists of three principal divisions:—

I. The forcible picture of unrighteousness in the seat of judgement. Ver. 1—5.

II. The swift punishment which is about to overtake these unjust judges, and for which the Psalmist prays. Ver. 6—9.

III. Lastly, the joy of those who shall behold their overthrow, and who shall acknowledge that, however the name of justice may

have been profaned by human judges who abuse their office, there is, nevertheless, a righteous Judge in the earth. Ver. 10, 11.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. "DESTROY NOT."\* A MICHAM OF DAVID.]

- I. 1 Do ye of a truth in silence speak righteousness?  
Do ye with uprightness judge the children of men?
- 2 Nay, rather, in heart ye work iniquities;  
In the earth ye weigh out the violence of your hands.
- 3 The wicked are estranged from the womb,  
They go astray from their birth, speaking lies.
- 4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent:  
They are like a deaf adder which stoppeth her ear,
- 5 Which hearkened not to the voice of enchanters,

1. IN SILENCE. They are *dumb* when they ought to speak, as afterwards they are said to be *deaf* when they ought to hear.

2. IN THE EARTH, *i.e.* openly, in your public administration; opposed to the "in heart," before.

YE WEIGH OUT; said sarcastically. Ye pretend indeed to hold the balance of justice, and nicely to weigh out to each his just award, but violence is the weight with which ye adjust the scales.

3. Those to whom the indignant question has been put cannot answer, being condemned by their own consciences, and therefore the Poet goes on at once, abandoning the form of address, to give a further description of their character in the third person. Or possibly the description may apply, not to the unrighteous judges, but to the evil-doers whom they countenance and support.

FROM THEIR BIRTH, lit. "from the belly." See on li. 5. The object however, here, is clearly not to insist upon the general truth of an innate

depravity, but rather to mark the special character of these wicked men as men whose *whole life* has been one continuous unchecked career of wickedness—bold, habitual, hardened transgressors, whose maturity in vice is what might be expected from their early depravity.

4, 5. Their wickedness is desperate, for they are like the adder, which the subtlest charmer cannot tame. The ADDER is mentioned as peculiarly dangerous. (Comp. xci. 13; Job xx. 14, 16; Deut. xxxii. 33; Is. xi. 8.) The serpent-charmers, a class of men so well known in the East, are spoken of also Jer. viii. 17, Eccles. x. 11. For instances of the exercise of this art, which is still in vogue, see Lane's *Modern Egyptians*, vol. ii. chap. 20; Hengst. *Egypt and the Books of Moses*, p. 99 (Transl.), and especially the very full account, with references to authorities, both ancient and modern, given by Knobel, on Exod. vii. 11, pp. 60, 61.

5. OF ENCHANTERS, properly "whisperers." The allusion is prob-

\* See Introduction, p. 7.

To a charmer, charming never so wisely.

- II. 6 O God, break their teeth in their mouths,  
 The jaw-teeth of the young lions wrench out, O  
 Jehovah.
- 7 Let them melt away, as water which runneth apace;  
 When they shoot their arrows, let them be as  
 though cut off.
- 8 (Let them be) as a snail, which melteth away as  
 it goeth,  
 (Like) the untimely birth of a woman, (as those  
 who) have not beheld the sun.
- 9 Before your pots can feel the (fire of) thorns,  
 Both green and burning, they shall be whirled away.

ably to the hissing sound by which the enchanters endeavoured to draw out the serpents from their retreats.

A CHARMER, &c. lit. "one charming (with) charms," &c. (Deut. xviii. 11).

NEVER SO WISELY, lit. " (though) he be made wise, *i.e.* well versed in his art." (Comp. Is. iii. 3.) For a like use of the participle, comp. xxxix. 5, "at his best estate," lit. "though standing never so fast."

6. There is an abrupt change in the image employed. As these men are incorrigible in their wickedness, as they cannot be tamed, the Psalmist prays God to destroy their power for mischief; but instead of continuing the figure of the serpent-charmer, who robs the serpent of his poison, he suddenly represents them as young lions, whose teeth he would see broken that they may no longer devour. (Comp. iii. 7.)

7. Then in a series of bold figures he draws further the picture of the destruction which he would fain see come upon them.

The first is taken from water run-

ning away, and so wasted and lost (comp. 2 Sam. xiv. 14): the next from arrows shot, but with their points broken off and blunted, so that they fail to inflict a wound.

8. (WHICH) MELTETH AWAY (AS) IT GOETH, lit. "which goeth in melting" (or slime), the noun being in the accus. as describing the nature of the action, and the allusion being to the slimy trail which the snail leaves behind it, so that *it seems* to waste away. Evidently this is nothing more than a poetical figure, and need not be explained therefore as a popular error or a mistake in natural history.

HAVE NOT BEHELD THE SUN.  
 Comp. Job iii. 16.

9. The general sense of this difficult verse seems to be this: As a sudden whirlwind in the desert sweeps away the thorns which have been gathered for cooking, almost as soon as they have been set on fire, and before the cauldron has grown hot (comp. Eccles. vii. 6), so shall the wicked, and all their yet incomplete designs, be swept away by the wrath of God.



- III. 10 The righteous shall rejoice that he hath beheld (the)  
 vengeance,  
 He shall wash his footsteps in the blood of the  
 wicked ;  
 II So that man shall say, Surely there is a reward for  
 the righteous,  
 Surely there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

10. On the satisfaction here expressed in the prospect of vengeance on the ungodly, see on lii. 6. Comp. lxviii. 23 ; Deut. xxxii. 42, 43. This terrible vengeance was such as was not uncommonly practised in the wars of those times.

II. A REWARD, lit. "fruit." Comp. Is. iii. 10 ; Prov. i. 31.

THERE IS A GOD, or, perhaps, "there is a Deity," the word Elohim not used so much in the personal sense, as in contrast to those false judges who call themselves "gods" but are not.

## PSALM LIX.

THIS Psalm, which in tone, colouring, and expression, has much in common with the four preceding Psalms, is said in the title to have been composed by David when Saul's emissaries watched him in his own house. The history is given in I Sam. xix. 11—18. Saul commanded the men whom he sent to surround the house, and to kill David if he attempted to leave it. They were baffled by Michal's artifice, but from that hour Saul's hatred of him never slumbered, and he never ceased to persecute him and to hunt him down like a wild beast. It is quite consistent with David's character that he should commemorate in his songs such a crisis in his life. But the internal evidence lends little confirmation to the accuracy of the title. The allusions in verses 6 and 14 are obviously not peculiarly applicable to Saul's emissaries, as Hengstenberg admits ; and all that seems certain is, that the Psalm was called forth by some attack upon the life of its author.

The Psalm consists of two principal divisions, ver. 1—9, and ver. 10—17. Each of these again falls into two lesser strophes; the first, in each case, closing with *Selah*, and the last, in each case, opening with a similar verse, and closing with the refrain.

I. (1) A cry to God for help against enemies; a description of their persevering malice; an assertion of the Psalmist's own innocence, and the confiding of his cause to God as the Judge. Ver. 1—5.

(2) A further account of the machinations of the wicked; the confident assurance of their discomfiture, and an expression of trust in God. Ver. 6—9.

II. (1) This part opens with a renewed expression of trust in God, especially with reference to the issue of the struggle with his enemies; repeats the story of their malice, and also the prayer for their punishment, in such wise that God may be acknowledged as the Judge of the earth. Ver. 10—13.

(2) It closes with the curse upon the wicked, and with joyful acknowledgement of God's goodness to the Psalmist. Ver. 14—17.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. "DESTROY NOT." A MIGHTAM OF DAVID, WHEN SAUL SENT, AND THEY WATCHED THE HOUSE TO PUT HIM TO DEATH.]

- I. (1) I DELIVER me from mine enemies, O my God !  
       Set me on high from them that rise up against  
       me.  
 2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,  
       And save me from bloodthirsty men.  
 3 For lo, they have woven plots for my soul,  
       They gather themselves together against me in  
       their strength,  
       Not for my transgression, and not for any sin  
       of mine, O Jehovah !

3. 'THEY HAVE WOVEN.' The *perfect* as describing the past plotting and deliberation, whilst the present result is expressed by the verb in the *present* tense, "They gather," &c.  
       NOT FOR MY TRANSGRESSION,

4 Without guilt (of mine) do they run and set themselves.

Awake, then, to meet me, and see!

5 Yea, do THOU, O Jehovah God (of) hosts, God of Israel,

Rouse Thyself to visit all the nations!

Spare not all them that are faithless in (their) iniquity. [Selah.]

&c., lit. "Without my transgression and without my sin."

4. RUN AND SET THEMSELVES. The words are military terms: for the first, see xviii. 29 (according to one interpretation), Job xv. 26, xvi. 14; the other denotes the marshalling in order, the array of troops, with a view to the execution of a determined plan. Or, as Hengstenberg explains, a metaphor borrowed from an attacking host, which, getting a firm footing on the walls of a beleaguered city, is ready to rush in over them, or through them has already broken, into the city.

TO MEET ME, *i.e.* to help me; comp. ver. 10, and see vii. 6. The phrase is elsewhere used in the opposite sense, xxxv. 2.

5 THOU. The pronoun is emphatic, the heart turning to God as the sure defence against its fierce and cruel enemies.

JEHOVAH GOD, or "Jehovah Elohim," the name of God, which is characteristic of the section, Gen. ii. 4—iii. 23. Joined, as here, with Sabaoth (hosts), it occurs besides lxxx. 4, 19, lxxxiv. 8. In calling Jehovah *the God of hosts*, the Psalmist sets forth, as Calvin observes, His boundless power; in adding *the God of Israel*, the peculiar regard which He has for His own children and the Church.

ALL THE NATIONS, *i.e.* heathen nations, but it is difficult to determine why they are particularly mentioned here. Some suppose that the Psalmist

was living among heathens; others, that the term "nations" is here improperly applied to those Israelites who, in their godlessness, were no better than heathen. But the expression, "*all nations*," is against the first view, and the second is wholly unsupported by usage. It is more probable that the language is intended to denote that God is the *universal* Judge. "The nations," to an Israelite, would be the embodiment of all that opposed itself to God; and in appealing to God to punish them, he would, in fact, be appealing to Him to punish all evil wherever manifested. The special judgement would follow from the universal, and be an instance of it. Even for the vindication of His personal innocence, we find one Psalmist (vii. 6—8) calling upon God to assemble all nations to His judgement-seat.

Such expressions seem to us exaggerated, partly because of the comparative coldness of the Western mind, and partly because it is very difficult for us to conceive of the feelings of a true Israelite, to whom the whole outer heathen world was a world lying under the heavy wrath of God, and to whom the greater part even of Israel itself seemed corrupt and apostate. An intensity both of privilege and also of suffering thus attached to the "small remnant," which it is necessary to remember if we would understand the strong language of Psalmists and Prophets.

FAITHLESS IN (THEIR) INIQUITY

- (2) 6 They return at evening, they howl like the dog,  
And make their round about the city.  
7 Lo, they belch out with their mouth,  
Swords are in their lips;  
For who (they think) doth hear?  
8 But THOU, O Jehovah, dost laugh at them,  
Thou mockest at all (the) nations.  
9 O my strength, for Thee let me wait,  
For God is my high tower.

II. (1) 10 My God with His loving-kindness shall come to  
meet me,

or, iniquitous traitors. Ewald renders: *alle sündliche Räuber*, "all sinful robbers," taking the other meaning of the participle.

6. He compares his enemies to the gaunt, hungry, half-starved, half-wild dogs which to this day, in the East, prowl in troops about the cities and villages, without a master, looking for the offal and carrion which are their food, wherever they can find it. Comp. xxii. 16; 1 Kings xiv. 11; 2 Kings ix. 36.

AT EVENING, *i.e.* every evening, the evening being the time when these animals usually assemble: or denoting, as Calvin thinks, their insatiable cruelty, "for he says that they return at evening, not because they rest at other times, but because they are never tired in their wickedness. If all day long they get nothing, the evening will find them still running about the city." Comp. lv. 10, Cant. iii. 2.

7. THEY BELCH OUT. Such seems here to be the force of the word as given by the E. V. Properly it means "to gush out," as water; see the same word in xix. 2, "Day unto day poureth forth speech." Comp. xciv. 4; Prov. xv. 2, 28.

8. BUT THOU. These men with their murderous thoughts, whose very words are swords (comp. lii. 2, lv. 21, lvii. 4), and who feel so secure in their bloodthirsty designs that they think God hearkens not and will not punish, shall learn their mistake. *Thou*, O God, *Thou* whom they forget, wilt laugh them to scorn, as *Thou* dost all throughout the world who oppose Thee. Hence he says,

ALL NATIONS, taking the widest view, and therefore including those who are here the prominent enemies. See above on ver. 5; or, as Calvin explains, though they should in numbers equal the whole world, yet they and their power would all be mocked. Comp. ii. 4, xxxvii. 13.

9. "David here ascends the watch-tower of faith, whence he can look down calmly on the violent assaults of his foes, fully assured that they can do nothing but by the permission of God."—*Calvin*.

10. The prayer that follows is a very fearful one. The Psalmist would not have his enemies crushed in a moment by the heavy hand of God, but he would see them come to a lingering end; he would have God take them, as it were, in their own

God shall make me see (my desire) upon them  
that lie in wait for me.

11 Slay them not, lest my people forget (it),  
Make them reel by Thy power, and cast them  
down, O Lord, our shield!

12 Their mouth sinneth through every word of their  
lips,

And so let them be taken in their pride;  
And because of (their) cursing and of lying  
which they speak.

13 Consume (them) in wrath, consume (them), that  
they be no more,

That men may know that God ruleth in Jacob  
Unto the ends of the earth. [Selah.]

(2) 14 And they shall return at evening, they shall howl  
like the dog,

infatuation; he would see them reel and stagger in the intoxication of their own pride, and under the strong buffeting of God's hand, a spectacle and a warning to all, before they are finally cast down; he would watch their course as they are carried, blind with passion, to the summit, thence to be hurled headlong over the precipice. Comp. with this curse, 2 Sam. iii. 29, and 1 Sam. ii. 36.

11. MAKE THEM REEL, lit. "make them wander," which many take literally and not metaphorically. So Hengst., who compares the curse on Cain, Gen. iv. 12, and Numb. xxxii. 13, Ps. cix. 10.

OUR SHIELD, as in iii. 3, xviii. 2, xxviii. 7.

12. THEIR MOUTH SINNETH, &c.; lit. "The word of their lips (is) the sin of their mouth," *i.e.* every word of their mouth is sin.

13. CONSUME THEM. This does not contradict the previous interpretation. He would have his enemies

destroyed at last, but only *after* they had been, by a protracted miserable existence, a warning to men of God's righteous severity.

GOD, and not Saul (if the allusion be to him), or any other whatsoever.

UNTO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH. This may mean that God, sitting in Jacob, having there His Throne, exercises thence a universal dominion. But, according to the accent, these words should rather be connected with the words "that men may know." So Calvin: "David indicates a singular kind of punishment, one the fame of which would reach even the most distant nations." And so Hengst., who refers to David's words to Goliath, 1 Sam. xvii. 46, "That all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."

14. This verse repeats what was said in ver. 6, but the language of ver. 15 shows plainly that a different turn is given here to the expression. There, the conduct of his enemies is

- And make their round about the city ;  
 15 As for them, they shall wander about for food,  
 Without being satisfied must they pass the night.  
 16 But as for me, I will sing of Thy strength,  
 Yea I will shout aloud, in the morning, of Thy  
 loving-kindness.  
 17 For thou hast been a high tower for me,  
 And a refuge in the day when I was in distress.  
 18 O my strength, unto Thee let me sing,  
 For God is my high tower (and) the God of my  
 loving-kindness.

described ; here, their punishment. They came about him like dogs ; like dogs shall they be treated. Their sin becomes its own curse. They come with their mouth wide open, ready to devour, but they shall find nothing to satisfy their hunger ; they shall remain, lean, hungry, savage, as they came. So Calvin : " There is an allusion to what he had before said concerning their ravenous hunger. For he does not now repeat the words in the same sense in which he had employed them before, but ironically says that they shall be hungry

in another way. Before, he complained that they barked like dogs because they were urged by an insatiable desire to do mischief ; but now he mocks at their wicked attempts, and says that, after they have wearied themselves all day long, they shall fail of their object."

16 IN THE MORNING, here apparently = "every fresh morning," parallel to "in the evening," ver. 6, 14.

17. The refrain occurs as at the end of the second strophe, ver. 9, but with slight variations.

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## PSALM LX.

ACCORDING to the title, this Psalm was composed in memory of Joab's victory over the Edomites in the Valley of Salt. Nothing is said in the scanty record in 2 Sam. viii. of the circumstances which led to this war ; but it is probable that whilst David was engaged in

his first Syrian campaign, the Edomites turned the opportunity to good account, and threatened, if they did not actually invade, Palestine. The king, therefore, was compelled hastily to detach Joab and some part of his forces to meet these new enemies. Whether they had not yet crossed the frontier, or whether they were on their way back from a successful raid into Hebrew territory, as has been conjectured, we do not know; but a severe battle was fought in the Valley of Salt, near the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, in which the Edomites were defeated with great slaughter. This battle decided the fate of the Edomites: they never rallied after it, and Joab overran the whole country. After the fashion of Eastern conquerors, he almost exterminated the male population, garrisoned the principal cities with Hebrew troops, and reduced the people to a state of vassalage. It was in the interval between the first great battle and the final subjugation of the country that this Psalm, as Hengstenberg and others suppose, was written. It seems to acknowledge a partial success, and to anticipate a greater: "Who *will* conduct me to the fortified city (or cities)? Who *hath* led me unto Edom?" Further, the Psalm speaks of the Moabites and Philistines as recently vanquished enemies, and from 2 Sam. viii. we know that they had been completely subdued by David shortly before his Syrian campaign. Lastly, it supposes the unity of the kingdom; Judah being the ruling tribe, and Ephraim at the same time maintaining a high and honourable position, without dissension and without rivalry; and this was the case only during the reigns of David and Solomon.

So far, no doubt, the contents of the Psalm agree very well with the statement made in the title as to the date of its composition. On the other hand, it opens with a wail of lamentation, which implies that the arms of Israel had met with some terrible reverses, or that the state had been shaken by intestine disorders. But we have no record in the history of any such catastrophe at the time. On the contrary, David seems to have been at the very height of his glory, and to have been everywhere victorious.

To say the least, therefore, it is not certain that the Psalm belongs to the age of David. In its lamentation over past disasters, it bears considerable resemblance to Psalm xliv., but it is so different from it in style, that it cannot have been written by the same author, nor does it seem to belong to the same period. Psalm xliv. is clearly the later Psalm, and may have been partly based upon this.

Ewald thinks that the Psalm in its present form is to be referred to a time after the Captivity, but that "the words from ver. 6 as far as the first words of ver. 10, 'Hast not Thou, O God?' are borrowed from an older, and no doubt Davidic song. . . . The dissimilarity strikes the eye at the first glance." The *old* passage, according to him, was composed by David in the latter part of his life, when he was threatened by the Philistines (comp. 2 Sam. v. 17, &c., xxiii. 13, &c.): he had besought counsel and strength from Jehovah in the sanctuary, and he here records the cheering answer which he received. The later poet, Ewald says, feeling how suitable such an oracle was to his own times, though the enemies which he had to fear were not *Philistines*, but other heathen nations, adopted it without alteration, merely adding a new introduction and a new conclusion in his own words, to make the whole more suitable to the times in which he lived.

The Psalm consists of three strophes :—

- I. A lamentation over past disasters, with a cry for help. Ver. 1—5.
- II. The appeal to God's word and promise as the sufficient pledge that the prayer which precedes will be answered. Ver. 6—8.
- III. The triumphant hope and anticipation of victory as springing out of and resting upon the Divine oracles. Ver. 9—12.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. UPON "THE LILY OF THE TESTIMONY."\*  
A MICHAM OF DAVID. FOR TEACHING. WHEN WE FOUGHT  
WITH ARAM OF THE TWO RIVERS (MESOPOTAMIA) AND ARAM  
ZOBAB; AND JOAB RETURNED AND SMOTE EDOM IN THE  
VALLEY OF SALT (TO THE NUMBER OF) TWELVE THOUSAND  
MEN.]

I. 1. O GOD, Thou hast cast us off, Thou hast broken us ;

<p>I THOU HAST CAST US OFF. The same word as in xlv. 9. It is also used of an individual in xliii. 2.</p>	<p>THOU HAST BROKEN US. The word is employed of the defeat of an army whose ranks have been</p>
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\* In the great darkness which envelopes this and other inscriptions, it is impossible to explain the words satisfactorily, but they most probably denote the measure or melody to which the Psalm was to be set. For Michtam, see Ps. xvi. page 62.



- Thou hast been angry; restore us again.  
 2 Thou hast made the land to tremble, Thou hast  
     cleaved it;  
     Heal the breaches thereof, for it hath tottered.  
 3 Thou hast showed Thy people a hard thing,  
     Thou hast made us drink infatuation as wine.  
 4 Thou hast given to them that fear Thee a banner,

broken, 2 Sam. v. 20, where the comparison is made of water breaking through a dam. In Judges xxi. 15, it is said of the destruction of the tribe of Benjamin, that "Jehovah had made a *breach* (*Perez*) in the tribes of Israel," a great gap being left as it were in the goodly phalanx which the twelve tribes presented.

2. The metaphor is borrowed apparently from the action of an earthquake, which had split asunder the ground, and torn it into rifts and chasms. In like manner there has been a violent disorganization of the body politic. Hupfeld infers from the words "Heal the *breaches* thereof," that the image (as in the previous verse) is that of a building or wall broken down, an image frequently employed in the O.T., and one which in Is. xxx. 13 is applied to the overthrow of the nation. But both figures may have been in the Psalmist's mind; the "trembling of the land" denoting the earthquake, and the second member of the verse referring to its effects in broken buildings and tottering walls. Whether the "cleaving" here spoken of is to be understood of the actual disruption of the kingdom and the separation of the tribes is not certain. In any case, however, verses 2 and 3 are more readily understood of internal political disorganization than of the terror produced by hostile invasion.

3. THOU HAST SHOWED, lit. "made to *see*," i.e. made to *feel* or

experience, the verb of *sight* being used, as in Greek, of the senses generally. A HARD THING, a heavy fate; the same word as in 1 Sam. xx. 10, 1 Kings xii. 13.

INFATUATION, or "bewilderment," lit. "reeling, staggering," as the effects of intoxication. This infatuation is the wine which God has made them drink, the two words being in apposition with one another: the rendering of the E.V., "the wine of astonishment," is grammatically impossible. The same figure occurs lxxv. 8, Is. li. 17, 22, Jer. xiii. 13, xxv. 15, xlix. 12, and in many other passages. It denotes not merely a Divine punishment, but that kind of punishment which comes of men's own desperate indulgence of their pride, folly, and passion. When men *will* drink presumptuously of the cup of their own wickedness, God forces it as it were into their hands, till they have drained the very dregs as the cup of His wrath. Thus God punishes evil with greater evil, pride with presumptuous pride, folly with more desperate folly. As is usual in the O. T. this, though sin as well as curse, is ascribed directly to God, as is the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, the sending of the evil spirit into Saul, and of a lying spirit into the false prophets. See note on li. 4.

4. A BANNER. The standard was raised as a signal for war, round which they were to rally. (Comp. Is. v. 26, xiii. 2.) The fact that God

That they may muster (around it) from before  
the bow, [Selah.]

- 5 That Thy beloved may be delivered ;  
Save (with) Thy right hand, and answer us.

II. 6 God hath spoken in His holiness ;  
Let me exult, let me portion out Shechem,  
And the valley of Succoth let me measure.

had given them such a banner, that He had Himself reared it in the midst of them, was a ground of hope and also of prayer, "Save Thy right hand," &c.

5. THY BELOVED, the same word as in Deut. xxxiii. 12, and in the name Jedidiah given to Solomon.

6. Having thus encouraged himself and his people with the assurance of God's favour and the hope of deliverance, he now turns to the promises on which those hopes rested. "Nam utcunque Deus innumeris gratiæ suæ exemplis nos obruat, nulla tamen vigeat eorum notitia, nisi præfulgente verbo."—*Calvin*.

GOD HATH SPOKEN IN HIS HOLINESS, almost equivalent to "hath promised by His holiness." Comp. lxxxix. 35, "One thing have I sworn by My holiness," Amos iv. 2. The LXX. have ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ αὐτοῦ. Jerome, *In sanctuario suo*, and so Luther, "In His sanctuary," as if the allusion were to an oracle shortly before received ; and Delitzsch suggests that in the war with Edom, David may have received an oracle from the High Priest by means of the Urim and Thummim, which assured him of the safety of the Holy Land, and of his victory over the bordering tribes. But, as he admits, the promise in 2 Sam. vii. 9 is quite sufficient to meet the occasion. Hengst. thinks that Gen. xlix., Numb. xxiv., Deut.

xxxiii. may also have been in the Psalmist's mind.

In the words that follow, "Let me exult," &c., to the end of ver. 8, there is some doubt who is the speaker. According to some interpreters, it is God. Ewald is of the same opinion, except that he takes the first words, "Let me exult," as the words of the Psalmist himself, parenthetically—which is favoured by the accent—and the rest as the utterance of the Divine oracle. The most probable view seems to me to be that the king is the speaker, though it is possible that by a bold figure God Himself may be supposed to speak as an earthly warrior, and as the leader of the hosts of His people through whom they achieve the victory. He, as their true King and Captain, identifies Himself with them, and hence speaks not only of their success, but of their joy, as His own.

PORTION OUT . . . MEASURE, in allusion to the assigning the different portions of the conquered territory, as by Joshua, on the conquest of Canaan. Here, however, the figure is borrowed from the original conquest of the country and applied to its reconstitution, not by means of a redistribution of territory, but by a fresh political organization, which should give new life to the whole country, and be as it were the beginning of a new state.

- 7 Mine is Gilead, and mine Manasseh,  
 Ephraim also is the defence of my head ;  
 Judah is my sceptre.  
 8 Moab is my wash-pot ;

SHECHEM and SUCCOTH are probably selected as famous names in ancient times ; some think they are intended to mark, the one the cis-Jordanic, and the other the trans-Jordanic region, and so to embrace the whole land which Israel claimed on both sides the river as his inheritance. Succoth was the first place at which Jacob halted when, on his return from Mesopotamia, he descended from the mountains of Gilead, and it received its name from the "booths" or "huts" which he then built there. (Comp. Gen. xxxiii. 16, 18, with Judg. viii. 5—17, whence it appears that Succoth lay between Peniel, near the ford of the Jabbok, and Shechem.) Shechem in the heart of Palestine was his next station, and there he found a permanent home : it became afterwards the chief city of the tribe of Ephraim, and for a time the capital of the northern kingdom. But it seems doubtful whether Succoth was on the east of the Jordan. Jerome, indeed (*Quæst. in Gen.* xxxiii. 16), places it there, and the fact that it was allotted to the tribe of Gad (Josh. xiii. 27) renders this probable. On the other hand, Robinson (*B. R.* iii. 309, &c.) and Van de Velde (*Syr. and Pal.* ii. 343) identify it with a place called *Sâkât*, on the western bank of the river. "Until the position of Succoth is more exactly ascertained, it is impossible to say what was the valley of Succoth." (See Mr. Grove's article SUCCOTH, in the *Dict. of the Bible.*) Why this valley should be mentioned at all, it is hard to say, except it be from its old association with Shechem in the history of Jacob, Gen. xxxiii.

7. This verse has reference both to the geographical and to the political division of the Holy Land. Geographically, Gilead and Manasseh denote the Israelitish territory east of the Jordan, as Ephraim and Judah represent Western Palestine. Politically, these two tribes were the most important, the one in the north, and the other in the south ; and thus the whole land and nation are in fact summed up.

THE DEFENCE OF MY HEAD, the strong and warlike tribe of Ephraim being to the state what the helmet is to the warriors in battle ; or perhaps, "the *strength* of my head," the allusion being to Deut. xxxiii. 17, "His horns are as the horns of a buffalo : with them he shall push the nations."

MY SCEPTRE, or "baton of command." The reference is to Gen. xlix. 10, where, as well as in Numb. xxi. 18, the parallelism seems to require this meaning. But the other rendering, "My Lawgiver," may be defended by Deut. xxxiii. 21, 1s. xxxiii. 22, and has the support of the Ancient Versions.

8. But the Psalmist anticipates not the constitution only of the kingdom in its integrity and its firm consolidation by the union of the various tribes, but the extension of the kingdom also by the subjugation of neighbouring nations. Those nations are chiefly mentioned which had been from the earliest times the enemies, and the bitterest enemies, of Israel. The order in which they are mentioned is from the east, and thence along the south to the west. None of them was ever completely subjugated, though David greatly reduced

Upon Edom will I cast my shoe.  
Because of me, O Philistia, cry aloud.

- III. 9 Who will conduct me into the fenced city ?  
Who hath led me unto Edom ?  
10 Hast not THOU, O God, cast us off ?  
And dost not Thou, O God, go forth with our  
hosts ?  
11 O give us help from the adversary,  
For vain is the salvation of man.

them and humbled their power, 2 Sam. viii. ; but triumph over them forms part of the promise of later Prophets. See especially Is. xi. 14, where it is promised in connection with the union of Ephraim and Judah.

The expressions which follow, indicating the subjugation of Moab and Edom, are decidedly contemptuous.

MY WASH-POT, expressive of the state of ignominious bondage to which the Moabites would be reduced. The vessel used for washing the feet is meant as a dishonourable vessel. (Comp. Herod. ii. 172.) This meaning is perhaps intended to be conveyed by the rendering of one of the Greek translators, *λεκάνη τῆς καταπατήσεώς μου*.

WILL I CAST MY SHOE. Edom is regarded as the slave to whom the master throws his shoes to be taken away or to be cleaned. Comp. Matt. iii. 11. The expression is not used of taking possession of property, for in Ruth iv. 7 the kinsman does not throw his shoe, but takes it off and gives it ; and so far from the action being symbolical of taking possession, it is symbolical of giving up one's right. There is thus a connection between the two figures ; Moab is the vessel in which he washes his feet, Edom the slave to whom he casts his shoe which he has just drawn off.

CRY ALOUD. I have left the word in its ambiguity. As it is elsewhere used of a shout of rejoicing and triumph, it has been explained either (1) ironically, as by Kimchi, "Triumph if thou canst, it is rather for me to triumph now ;" or (2) of the forced homage, the shout of welcome and gratulation extorted by the victor from the vanquished. (Comp. ii. 12, xviii. 44.) Ewald and others understand it of the cry of fear and sorrow. In the parallel passage in cviii. 9 we have the easier reading, "Over Philistia will I shout aloud," *i.e.* in triumph, which Hupfeld would adopt here.

9. The application of these Divine promises to the present condition of the nation.

WHO WILL CONDUCT ME, as the expression of a wish apparently = "Oh for one to conduct me !"

THE FENCED CITY. Comp. xxxi. 21. Although the article is wanting, still some particular city may be meant, the absence of the article being not uncommon in poetry. Hengstenberg thinks that "the wonderful rock-built city of Petra" (comp. 2 Kings xiv. 7), others that Rabbath Ammon or Rabbath Moab, is meant ; Calvin, that the noun is used collectively of fortified cities generally.

10. HAST NOT THOU, &c. This might also be rendered " (Wilt) not

12 Through God shall we do valiantly ;  
 And it is HE who shall tread down our  
 adversaries.

Thou, O God, (*who*) hast cast us off, and goest not forth," &c., there being an ellipse of the relative after the personal pronoun. But in cviii. 11, where the passage is repeated, it is

without the pronoun *Thou*, and consequently the relative *who* cannot be understood. See also xlv. 9.

12. DO VALIANTLY. Comp. cxviii. 16, and Numb. xxiv. 18.

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PSALM LXI.

THE title of this Psalm ascribes it to David, but does not say under what circumstances it was composed (though according to the Syriac Version it was when Jonathan revealed to him Saul's design to slay him). There is no reason to doubt that David was the author, and the language of ver. 2 renders it probable that it was written when he was shut out from the sanctuary, and therefore either during his persecution by Saul, or during the rebellion of Absalom. Verse 4 makes the latter the more probable occasion. At a time when the Tabernacle had itself no settled resting-place, the wish to dwell and abide in it, as Delitzsch has rightly remarked, is not so natural as afterwards, when the Ark was fixed on Mount Zion.

Again, if, as is most probable, the king spoken of in ver. 6 is David—then it is clear that the Psalm must have been written after he was king, and therefore in his flight from Absalom and on the other side of the Jordan. Or if it be thought that David would not thus speak of himself in the third person, the Psalm may still have been composed under the same circumstances, by one of the friends who accompanied him.

It consists of two principal divisions, ver. 1—5 and ver. 6—8. But these again admit of sub-divisions :—

I. First, we have the usual introduction. Ver. 1.

Then, the prayer, and the ground on which it rests. Ver. 2, 3.

Then, the ardent wish to dwell in the sanctuary of God, accompanied by the reason for such a wish. Ver. 4, 5.

II. Hopes expressed concerning the king. Ver. 6, 7.

Finally, the usual conclusion, the vow of grateful praise. Ver. 8.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. ON A STRINGED INSTRUMENT (A PSALM)  
OF DAVID.]

- I. 1. HEAR my cry, O God ;  
Attend unto my prayer.  
2 From the end of the earth unto Thee do I call when  
my heart is overwhelmed ;  
To a rock which is too high for me, Thou wilt lead  
me.  
3 For Thou hast been a refuge for me,  
A strong tower from the face of the enemy  
4 Let me sojourn in Thy tabernacle for ever,  
Let me find refuge in the hiding-place of Thy wings.  
[Selah.]

2. FROM THE END OF THE EARTH. A strong hyperbolical expression by which the sacred Poet would describe his own *sense* of his distance from the sanctuary, or from the Holy Land. Comp. Is. v. 26. The feeling is that which is expressed in xlii. 6, and other Psalms.

IS OVERWHELMED, or "fainteth." The verb means literally "to cover," as in lxxiii. 6; hence "to cover one's face in sorrow," and then as here, "to be overwhelmed with distress."

TO A ROCK, lit. "*Upon* a rock," the full construction being "Thou wilt lead me to and place me upon," &c. The rock is a place of security (comp. xl. 2), but it is one which he cannot reach by his own unaided effort.

THOU WILT LEAD ME. The words may be either thus rendered as an expression of confidence (future), or

as a prayer (imperative). There is the same ambiguity in ver. 6.

3. This appeal to God is now based, as commonly in the Psalms, on the past experience of His mercy.

A STRONG TOWER, as in Judg. ix. 51, Prov. xviii. 10, "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower."

4. LET ME SOJOURN. See notes on xv. 1, xxvii. 4.

IN THY TABERNACLE, or "tent." The expression is figurative, no doubt, but would hardly have been employed after the Temple was built, and hence it is almost certain that the Psalm belongs to the time of David.

FOR EVER, lit. "(for) ages." The plur. only occurs again cxlv. 13.

THY WINGS. The figure is borrowed, as the parallelism shows, from the outstretched wings of the Cherubim over the Mercy-seat. See lvii. 1.

- 5 For Thou, O God, hast hearkened to my vows,  
 Thou hast given (me) the possession of them that  
 fear Thy Name.

- II. 6 Thou wilt prolong the King's days,  
 His years shall be as many generations.  
 7 He shall sit (on his throne) for ever before God ;  
 Loving-kindness and truth do Thou appoint to  
 preserve him.  
 8 So let me sing of Thy Name for ever,  
 That I may pay my vows day by day.

5. THE POSSESSION. Primarily this would be the Land of Canaan, and then it would include all blessings, temporal and spiritual, which were in fact implied and comprised in the possession of the land.

6. THOU WILT PROLONG, &c. lit. "Days to the King's days wilt Thou add." The king, according to the Targum, is the king Messiah. The eternal duration of the kingdom here anticipated, no doubt led to this interpretation. But in the original sense of the passage, not merely an in-

dividual monarch, but the *dynasty*, the whole royal house of David, may be meant. But see note on xxi. 4.

The king is spoken of in the third person, but the Psalm may nevertheless have been written by David himself.

7. HE SHALL SIT. The verb may only signify "He shall *abide, dwell*," but when spoken of kings and judges it is commonly employed in the more formal and solemn sense of sitting on the throne, the judgement-seat, &c.

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## PSALM LXII.

THIS Psalm and the 39th are Psalms which, though very different in their subject, yet are so similar in the phraseology which they employ, that there can be no doubt that they were written by the same author. Ewald supposes, from the 11th verse of this Psalm, that he was a Prophet, and one of the great supporters of true religion in the struggle with the corrupt men of his time. We see him here,

he says, "contending with men, his fellow-citizens, who, upheld and favoured by a worldly power which was just starting into fresh life, endeavoured for this very reason to drag him down into the dust, because they could not endure his spiritual greatness and superiority. Long had they attacked him; now they felt sure of his overthrow. But, strong in his trust in God, though assailed and threatened afresh, the divine Poet places himself in calm resignation in the hands of the one true Redeemer, and not only finds in Him rest, refreshment, strength for himself, but is also enabled to encourage, enlighten, and comfort others."

Scarcely anywhere do we find faith in God more nobly asserted, more victoriously triumphant; the vanity of man, of human strength and riches, more clearly confessed, courage in the midst of peril more calm and more unshaken, than in this Psalm, which is as forcible in its conception and its language as it is remarkable for the vigorous and cheerful piety which it breathes.

Donne, in his sermon on ver. 9, says that Athanasius "observes in the Psalm a summary abridgement of all: for of this Psalm he says in general, *Adversus insidiantes*, Against all attempts upon thy body, thy state, thy soul, thy fame, temptations, tribulations, machinations, defamations, says this Psalm . . . not that therein David puts himself to weigh particular temptations and tribulations, but that he puts every man, in every trial, to put himself wholly upon God, and to know, that if man cannot help him in this world, nothing can; and for man, *Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.*"—*Sermon lxxv.*; *Works*, vol. iii. p. 137, Alford's Edition.

The Psalm consists of three strophes of four verses each. The first two express the blessedness and security of trust in God when enemies assail, ver. 1—4 and ver. 5—8. The last places in forcible contrast with this the folly of reliance on man, ver. 9—12.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. AFTER THE MANNER OF JEDUTHUN.\* A  
PSALM OF DAVID.]

I. 1 ONLY upon God my soul (waiteth in) silence.

I. ONLY. The particle may be so affirmative. It occurs no less than rendered as restrictive, or, *surely*, as six times in the Psalm. In xxxix.

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\* Perhaps a musical instrument called after the name of Jeduthun.



- From Him cometh my salvation.  
 2 Only He is my rock and my salvation,  
 My high tower, so that I cannot be greatly moved.  
 3 How long will ye set upon a man ?  
 Will ye all of you break (him) down,  
 As (though he were) a bowing wall, a tottering fence ?  
 4 Only from his dignity have they taken counsel to  
 thrust him down,  
 They who have pleasure in lies,

5, 6, it is repeated three times in three successive lines, one of the indications that the two Psalms are by the same author. Our translators have rendered it differently in different verses of this Psalm: in ver. 1, *truly*; in vers. 2, 4, 5, 6, *only*; in ver. 9, *surely*: but it is better to keep the same word throughout, at least in the same Psalm. If we render *only*, the meaning will be here that God exclusively is the object of trust; if *surely*, that this truth, that God is his salvation, has come home to him with a more lively conviction, with a more blessed certainty, than ever. Hupfeld thinks that in ver. 4 the rendering *surely* is necessary, and therefore that this is to be preferred throughout; on the other hand, in ver. 5, *only* is certainly more suitable.

The first line of the verse rendered literally is, "Only unto God my soul is silence," *i.e.* is hushed into perfect resignation before Him, simply trusting in His Love, and leaving all that concerns me to the disposal of His fatherly will. "It is," says Calvin, "that settled submission, when the faithful rest in the promises of God, give place to His word, obey His rule, and keep down every murmur of passion in their hearts." But this, as he also remarks most truly, is the result, not of one only, but of many struggles with the temptations of Satan.

2. MY SALVATION. The repetition of the word is not without meaning. Not only does his salvation *come from* God, but God *is* his salvation. The Being on whom he waits, the loving Person in whom he trusts, the God whose arms compass him about, is to him all that is comprehended in that great word Salvation. He heaps these epithets upon God, says Calvin, that he may use them as so many shields against the assaults of Satan.

3. Having thus strengthened himself in his God, the Psalmist turns to address his enemies. The form of the address is very similar to that in iv. 2. There, they are men who would turn his glory (*i.e.* his kingly dignity) into shame, as here they would thrust him down from his high place. There too, as here, they have pleasure in lies. But here the circumstance "that they bless with their mouth, but curse inwardly," points to men who had worn the courtier's mask of a smooth hypocrisy, in order to conceal the better their designs against his life and honour, but who had thrown it off, as soon as they found that they could do so with safety. When he was in peril, when he seemed to be already tottering to his fall, like a wall shaking and giving way, then they were ready to finish the work by thrusting him down altogether.

Who bless (each one) with his mouth, and curse inwardly. [Selah.]

- II. 5 Only upon God wait in silence, O my soul,  
     For from Him is my hope.  
 6 Only He is my rock and my salvation,  
     My high tower, so that I cannot be moved.  
 7 Upon God (resteth) my salvation and my glory ;

5. WAIT IN SILENCE. The first strophe opens with the expression of his resignation ; this, with the exhortation to resignation. But this is no contradiction. The life of man's spirit cannot always preserve the same even tenour. The heart of man is like the sea ; however calm and smooth it may seem, a light air will ruffle its surface. The resignation, the trust in God, the peace, the rest, which have come after long struggle and much prayer, may too easily be broken. And hence, when these have been attained, we need to exhort ourselves to them in renewed measure.

FOR FROM HIM IS MY HOPE. "He never disappoints the patient abiding of His children. There is laid up, he says, a sure reward for my silence, and therefore will I restrain myself, lest my haste should hinder the course of my salvation." —*Calvin*.

6, 7. Still further he strengthens himself in God, and again heaps up one expression upon another, that he may, as it were, feel how safe and sure the ground is under him, how little reason he has to be disquieted, whatever man may do unto him. (See note on ver. 2). Then having thus encouraged himself, he turns to encourage others.

On these reiterated names of God, Donne beautifully observes, in the

Sermon before quoted : "Twice in this Psalm hath he repeated this, in the second and in the sixth verse, *He is my rock, and my salvation, and my defence*, and (as it is enlarged in the seventh verse) *my refuge and my glory*. If my *refuge*, what enemy can pursue me? If my *defence*, what temptation shall wound me? If my *rock*, what storm shall shake me? If my *salvation*, what melancholy shall deject me? If my *glory*, what calumny shall defame me? . . . Let him that is pursued with any particular temptation, invest God, as God is a *refuge*, a sanctuary. Let him that is buffeted with the messengers of Satan, battered with his own concupiscence, receive God, as God is his *defence* and target. Let him that is shaken with perplexities in his understanding, or scruples in his conscience, lay hold upon God, as God is his *rock* and his anchor. Let him that hath any diffident jealousy or suspicion of the free and full mercy of God, apprehend God, as God is his *salvation* ; and him that walks in the ingloriousness and contempt of the world, contemplate God as his *glory*. Any of these notions is enough to any man, but God is all these, and all else that all souls can think, to every man." —*Works*, vol. iii. pp. 154, 155.

7, UPON GOD. Comp. vii. 10. "My shield is upon God."

The rock of my strength, my refuge, is in God.

8 Trust in Him, at all times, O people ;

Pour out your hearts before Him.

God is a refuge for us. [Selah.]

III. 9 Men of low degree are a breath, men of high degree  
a lie ;

In the balances they will kick the beam, lighter  
than a breath altogether.

10 Trust not in oppression, and in robbery be not vain ;  
When wealth increaseth, set not (your) heart  
(thereon).

11 Once hath God spoken ; twice have I heard this ;  
That power belongeth unto God.

12 And to Thee, O Lord, belongeth loving-kindness,  
For THOU rewardest every man according to his  
work.

8. O PEOPLE. This may either mean men generally, or the people of Israel in particular ; or if the Psalm be David's, it may refer to his immediate followers. The word is used in this sense of *retainers, followers, &c.*, Judg. iii. 18, 1 Kings xix. 21. These he exhorts to faith and prayer, that, like himself, they may learn the lesson of patience ; and as in ver. 7 he had claimed God as his own refuge, now he assures them that He is their refuge as well — God is a refuge for *us*.

9. In vivid contrast to that sure help and refuge which are to be found in God, the Psalmist now places the weakness and worthlessness of man's strength and man's resources.

MEN OF LOW DEGREE, &c. lit. "sons of (common) men, sons of (great) men." Comp. xlix. 2.

A BREATH. Symm. ἀτμός. Comp. with this and the next verse, note on xxxix. 5, 6, and the passage there quoted from St. James.

10. BE NOT VAIN, *i.e.* put not a

foolish trust in. The verb is a very expressive one, from the same root as the word rendered "breath" above. Comp. Jer. ii. 5.

11. In conclusion, the sacred Poet solemnly confirms his previous exhortation by an appeal to God's revelation.

ONCE . . . TWICE, *i.e.* many times. Comp. Job xxxiii. 14, xl. 5. And this is the substance of the revelation, that God is both a God of power, and a God of love. If we need strength, let us find it not in man, who is but as a fleeting vapour, but in God, who is Almighty. If we covet a reward, let us seek it not in robbery or in riches, but from the loving hand of Him who rewardeth every man according to his work. (Comp. Rom. ii. 6.) This is the only truly worthy representation of God. Power without Love is brutality, and Love without Power is weakness. Power is the strong foundation of Love, and Love is the beauty and the crown of Power.

## PSALM LXIII.

THIS is unquestionably one of the most beautiful and touching Psalms in the whole Psalter. Donne says of it: "As the whole book of Psalms is *oleum effusum* (as the Spouse speaks of the name of Christ), an ointment poured out upon all sorts of sores, a cerecloth that supplies all bruises, a balm that searches all wounds; so are there some certain Psalms that are imperial Psalms, that command over all affections, and spread themselves over all occasions,—catholic, universal Psalms, that apply themselves to all necessities. This is one of those; for of those constitutions which are called Apostolical, one is, that the Church should meet every day to sing this Psalm. And, accordingly, St. Chrysostom testifies, 'That it was decreed and ordained by the primitive fathers, that no day should pass without the public singing of this Psalm.'" And again he observes, that "the spirit and soul of the whole Book of Psalms is contracted into this Psalm."—*Sermon* lxvi. ; *Works*, vol. iii. pp. 156, 157.

In many respects the Psalm bears a striking resemblance to Ps. lxi., and both Ewald and Maurer observe that the two must clearly be referred to the same circumstances and the same author. That the author was David I see no reason to doubt. Characterized as it is by an exquisite tenderness and a deep personal affection towards God, and yet not wanting, withal, in energy and even a certain abruptness of expression, it bears all the marks of his poetry. According to the inscription, it was written in the wilderness of Judah, which would seem to intimate that it was written during his persecution by Saul (comp. 1 Sam. xxii. 5), to which occasion the Syriac Version expressly ascribes it; see also xxiii. 14, 15, 24, 25, xxiv. 2. But against this is ver. 11, where David, as in lxi., speaks of himself in the third person, and speaks of himself as king. Hence it is more probable that the Psalm was composed when he was on the other side of the Jordan, in his flight from Absalom. The very tenderness and depth of feeling which characterize it, and which

it has in common with xlii., are what might be looked for in a heart sorely wounded and tried in its natural affections, and therefore cleaving with the more intense, devoted love to Him, of whom it could say, "Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I shout for joy."

The Psalm consists of two principal divisions :—

I. The longing of the heart for God, and the joy of the heart in communion with Him. Ver. 1—8.

II. The anticipated destruction of his enemies, and his own triumph in consequence. Ver. 9—11.

[A PSALM OF DAVID. WHEN HE WAS IN THE WILDERNESS OF JUDAH.]

I. I O GOD, Thou art my God, earnestly do I seek Thee ;  
My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh pineth for Thee,  
In a dry and weary land where no water is.

I. I SEEK THEE, not as the E.V. "*Early* will I seek Thee." The noun which signifies "the dawn, the early morning," and the verb "to seek," are both from the same root, and are both to be referred to the same primitive idea. The meaning of the root is *to break in*, and hence this in the verb passes into the signification of *seeking* (earnestly), and in the noun *the dawn* is so called as that which *breaks in* upon the darkness.

MY FLESH, *i.e.* "my body," answering to "my soul" in the parall., and so describing the whole man. Comp. xvi. 9. So again, lxxxiv. 2, "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." In that intense worship in which every thought, feeling, desire, affection are centred in the One true Object of Love, body and soul both take their part.

It is as a living man, every pulse of his being filled with the love of God, that he responds to that love. And when he cries out, "O God, Thou art my God," this is not merely an appropriation of God as the God of his worship and trust : it is the *heart of flesh* stretching out *its human affections* towards Him who has a personal affection for His creature, and whose loving-kindness it knows to be better than life.

IN A DRY AND WEARY LAND. Some understand this literally, as describing the wilderness of Judah in which David was, according to the title of the Psalm. Others suppose that the language is figurative, and expresses the spiritual thirst and weariness of one who is shut out from God's Presence in the Sanctuary. There can be no doubt that the last is the true interpretation.

- 2 So have I gazed upon Thee in the sanctuary,  
To see Thy power and Thy glory ;
- 3 For thy loving-kindness is better than life ;  
My lips shall praise Thee.
- 4 So will I bless Thee, while I live,  
In Thy Name will I lift up my hands.
- 5 As with marrow and fatness shall my soul be satisfied,  
And with lips of joyful shouting my mouth shall  
praise (Thee).
- 6 When I have remembered Thee upon my bed,

Nevertheless, the figure may perhaps have been suggested by the natural objects which immediately surrounded the Psalmist, as afterwards the allusion to the jackals, ver. 10.

2. So : that is, with the same ardent desire, or such views have I had in past time of Thy glory, &c.

THY POWER AND THY GLORY. The special manifestation of these attributes was in the Holy Place. Comp. lxxviii. 61, where God is said to have given His power and His beauty (=glory here) into the adversary's hand, when the Ark was taken : see also 1 Sam. iv. 21, where *the glory* of God in like manner is identified with the Ark.

3. LIFE, in all the fulness of its earthly meaning. Life, and all the blessings of life, as they are commonly enjoyed. Comp. xvii. 14 ; Jer. viii. 3.

4. So, *i.e.* either with the same yearning affection, with the same heart of love and thanksgiving ; or, *accordingly, consequently* (because of Thy loving-kindness), as in lxi. 8. There is no reason to take the *So* in this verse as answering to the *So* in ver. 2. The connection between the first four verses is not very exact, but may be traced as follows : My soul longeth for Thee (ver. 1). With the same longing with which I now de-

sire to see Thee, I once did see Thee in Thy sanctuary (ver. 2). This longing is because of Thy loving-kindness, which is more precious than all else (ver. 3). Accordingly I will praise Thee all my life long (ver 4).

WHILE I LIVE, lit. "in, during, my life."

IN THY NAME, see xx. 1, 5, liv. 1. On the lifting up of the hands, as the gesture of prayer, see xxviii. 2.

5. AS WITH MARROW AND FATNESS, an image borrowed from a rich and splendid banquet. Comp. xxii. 26, 29, xxiii. 5, 6. Hupfeld, following J. H. Mich., thinks that the reference is immediately to the sacrificial meal which accompanied the thank-offering, here used as an image of thanksgiving (comp. l. 13, liv. 6, &c.), and that the comparison is between his delight in rendering thanksgiving to God, and the enjoyment of the fat of the sacrifices. But the simpler explanation is the more probable. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 14, Is. xxv. 6, Jer. xxxi. 14.

LIPS OF JOYFUL SHOUTING, or lips of jubilee.

6. WHEN I HAVE REMEMBERED . . . I MEDITATE. The heart having begun to occupy itself with the thought of God and His goodness, recalling all His loving-kindness in

- In the night-watches, when I meditate upon Thee.  
 7 For Thou hast been a help unto me,  
 And in the shadow of Thy wings will I shout for joy.  
 8 My soul hath followed hard after Thee,  
 Thy right hand hath upholden me.

- II. 9 But *they* to (their own) destruction seek my soul ;  
 They shall go into the lower parts of the earth,

past times, continues to dwell upon it through the hours of the night.

IN THE NIGHT-WATCHES, *i.e.* the whole night through. According to the O. T. division, there were three watches. (Comp. Lament. ii. 19, Jud. vii. 19, Ex. xiv. 24.) According to the Roman reckoning, which we find in the N.T., four.

7. On this verse Donne remarks: "Now as the spirit and soul of the whole Book of Psalms is contracted into this Psalm, so is the spirit and soul of the whole Psalm contracted into this verse."—*Sermon* lxvi. vol. iii. p. 157. It embraces, as he observes, the "whole compass of time, past, present, and future;" David, in the present distress, finding support in the past, and from that sure ground looking forward with confidence and joy to the future.

IN THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS. Comp. xvii. 8, xxxvi. 7, lvii. 1, lxi. 4. That which David "promises himself, is not an immunity from all powerful enemies, nor a sword of revenge upon those enemies, [but see ver. 10]; it is not that he shall have no adversary, nor that the adversary shall be able to do him no harm, but that he should have a refreshing, a respiration, *in velamento alarum*, under the shadow of God's wings."—*Donne*, p. 170.

8. The verse describes the mutual relation of the soul and God. The soul follows after God and cleaves to

Him (the expression in the Hebrew is literally, "my soul hath cleaved after Thee," so that the two ideas of following and cleaving are mingled); and God, on the other hand, stays and upholds the soul with His right hand. Out of that Hand of Power and Love neither man nor devil can pluck it.

9. Upon our modern feelings and thoughts this and the next verse seem, perhaps, somewhat to jar. We pass all at once into a different atmosphere. We have come down, as it were, from the mount of holy aspirations, into the common everyday world, where human enemies are struggling, and human passions are strong. Yet this very transition, harsh as it is, gives us a wonderful sense of reality. In some respects, it brings the Psalm nearer to our own level. The man who has been pouring out the fervent affection of his heart towards God is no mystic or recluse, lost in ecstatic contemplation, but one who is fighting a battle with foes of flesh and blood, and who hopes to see their malice defeated, their power crushed, and their carcasses left to be the prey of jackals in the wilderness. What may be called the human force of character remains even amid thoughts whose impassioned earnestness is not of this world, and whose strain of intensely exalted spiritual fervour is such as but very few can reach.

10 They shall be given over to the power of the sword,  
They shall become a portion for jackals.

11 But the king shall rejoice in God :

Every one that sweareth by Him shall boast himself ;

For the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

BUT THEY. The pronoun used emphatically, as placing his enemies in sharp contrast with himself.

INTO THE LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH. The expression seems here to denote Sheōl or Hades. The sentiment is the same as in ix. 17, lv. 15. In cxxxix. 15 it denotes merely "darkness, obscurity." In Is. xlv. 23 it seems to mean little more than the earth, as opposed to the heavens. Comp. Eph. iv. 9.

11. THE KING. See Introduction to the Psalm, and comp. lxi. 6.

EVERY ONE THAT SWEARETH BY HIM, *i.e.* every one to whom God is the object of religious fear, and trust, and worship (comp. Deut. vi. 13, Is. xix. 18, xlv. 23, lxxv. 16, Amos viii. 14), the Psalmist himself, and his friends and companions. Those on the other hand who, because they have no fear of God, seek to prevail by lies, shall be confounded.

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## PSALM LXIV.

THIS Psalm contains a stirring and vigorous picture of the plotting by which evil men were aiming at the Psalmist's life. It opens, as is usual in such Psalms, with a cry to God against their machinations ; it describes at length the methods they take to accomplish their purposes ; and it concludes with a confident prediction of their sudden and utter overthrow. We have already observed a similar strain of feeling in other Psalms, such as the 52d, 57th, 58th, and 59th. In all these we find allusions to the mischief done by *the tongue* of the wicked : in the last three the same figures are employed, the tongue and its words being compared to arrows and swords. Comp. lxiv. 3, 4, with lvii. 4, lviii. 7, lix. 7.



The Psalm is said to be David's, and the reasons that have been alleged to the contrary are of little weight.

The Psalm is regular in its structure, but scarcely admits of strophical division. We have, however, after the introductory petition in ver. 1, 2,

I. The description of the wicked and their devices. Ver. 3—6.

II. The destruction which shall assuredly come upon them, and which shall fill the righteous with joy. Ver. 7—10.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 HEAR my voice, O God, in my complaint,  
From terror of the enemy preserve my life.
- 2 Hide me from the conspiracy of evil-doers,  
From the throng of the workers of iniquity ;
- 3 Who have whet their tongue, like a sword,  
Who have aimed their arrow, (even) a bitter word,
- 4 That they may shoot in (their) lurking-places at the  
perfect ;  
Suddenly do they shoot at him and fear not.
- 5 They strengthen themselves in an evil purpose ;  
They reckon how they may lay snares privily ;  
They say, Who shall observe them ?

2. CONSPIRACY. This word denotes any kind of familiar intercourse, but generally *secret* converse, plotting, &c. ; whereas the word THRONG, in the parallelism, means properly, a noisy, tumultuous assemblage. Comp. lv. 14.

3. HAVE AIMED. The verb is used commonly of bending the bow, but is transferred also to the aiming of the arrow ; see lviii. 7. For the figures employed, comp. lii. 2.

4. AND FEAR NOT, *i.e.* God, who takes vengeance on the wicked (comp. lv. 19).

5, 6. These verses carry on the picture of the plots of these evil men, and especially describe their resolute persistence in their schemes, their confidence of success, and the depth and subtlety of their designs.

5. THEY STRENGTHEN THEMSELVES, or they harden themselves, lit. "They strengthen for themselves an evil thing (word)," *i.e.* they take every means to secure their object, follow it up resolutely, &c.

THEY RECKON ; each part of their evil plot being, as it were, carefully gone over and enumerated.

- 6 They search out iniquities ;  
 They have perfected (the) device devised (by them) ;  
 And the inward part of each (of them) and the heart  
 is deep.
- 7 But God hath shot at them with an arrow ;  
 Suddenly have their wounds come.
- 8 And He hath made them stumble, with their own  
 tongue against them ;  
 All that look upon them shake the head.
- 9 And all men have feared,  
 And they have declared God's doing,  
 And His work have they considered.
- 10 The righteous rejoiceth in Jehovah, and hath found  
 refuge in Him ;  
 And all the upright in heart boast themselves.

THEY SAY, *i.e.* within themselves, they think, as the word is often used in such phrases ; for the fuller expression see x. 6.

WHO SHALL OBSERVE THEM? The question is an indirect one, for which the Syr. substitutes the direct, "Who shall observe *us*?" The pron. *them* refers to the speakers, not to the snares. The prep. with the pronoun is not merely instead of the accus., but marks more distinctly the *aim* of the verb. Lit. "Who shall see (look) *at them*," as 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

6. AND THE INWARD PART, &c. This last clause is added loosely, as a further explanation of the character of the men. Tholuck, who supposes the Psalm to have been written by David at the court of Saul, when he became aware of the plots by which

others were seeking to injure him and traduce him to the king, sees in this clause the expression of amazement which fills the mind of the upright, honest youth, when he first becomes aware of the deep duplicity and treachery of the aspirants to royal favour, by whom he was surrounded.

7. The Divine judgement is now painted as if actually fulfilling itself before the very eyes of the Psalmist. Hence the verbs are in the past tense, by which a certain dramatic effect is produced, which is lost when they are rendered in the future. So vividly is the Divine judgement anticipated, that it is *as if* already accomplished.

8. SHAKE THE HEAD. For the gesture, as one of malicious triumph in looking upon suffering, &c., see xxii. 7.

## PSALM LXV.

WE can hardly doubt that this Psalm was composed on the occasion of an abundant harvest, and was intended to be sung as a hymn of thanksgiving by the whole congregation gathered before God in Zion. From the allusions in verses 7, 8, it would seem that the time was one of great political convulsions, of a shaking of nations and kingdoms, in the midst of which God had manifested His goodness to His people. The Psalm connects together these two great concurrent instances of God's protecting care and love. He had given peace to Zion when her enemies were raging around her. He had crowned her with the year of His goodness when drought and famine seemed to threaten. The "Hearer of prayer" had heard the petitions of His people, when they met to confess their sins and to make known their need before Him; and now it was but fitting that they should gather again within His courts, there to thank Him for His mercy, and to show forth all His praise.

This twofold character of the Psalm is best explained by referring it to the time immediately subsequent to the destruction of the Assyrian army before Jerusalem. An abundant harvest, it had been promised, *Is. xxxvii. 30*, should follow that event; and the fields so lately trampled beneath the feet of the invader seemed now, with their waving crops, to sing and shout for joy.

The title of the Psalm assigns it to David, but it is impossible to read it and not to feel that it bears every evidence of a later date. It has been suggested, and with some appearance of probability, that the Psalm was written about the time of Sennacherib's overthrow (*i.e.* about 712 B.C.).

The Psalm consists of three strophes :—

I. The opening is an expression of the thoughts and feelings with which the congregation may fitly approach God, now that they come to thank Him for His goodness. Ver. 1—4.

II. Then follows the celebration of the mighty acts of Jehovah, both in the world of nature and also among the nations, so that His name is known and acknowledged to the ends of the earth. Ver. 5—8.

III. Lastly, the special thanksgiving which is called forth by the refreshing rain which God has sent, and the rich and glorious harvest which is already waving and ripening before their eyes. Ver. 9—13.

The difference between the first and last strophe in the mode of expression is striking. In the first, there is a certain abruptness. The thoughts follow one another, not indeed altogether without order, but without anything like formal cohesion. In the last, on the other hand, the language flows with the thoughts. The bright harvest-scene is before the eyes of the inspired singer. He stands looking on the fields white already to the harvest, and his soul within him rejoices in their glorious promise. The Poet and the world without him are at one accord. The fulness of joy in his heart, as he sees how his God has poured blessing upon the land, passes as it were by a contagion of sunny gladness into the inanimate creation, and the very cornfields seem to him to shout together, yea to sing for joy.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID. A SONG.]

I. I PRAISE waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion :  
And unto Thee is (the) vow paid.

I—4. In these verses, whilst the meaning of the separate sentences is clear, it is not equally easy to trace the line of thought. I believe it to be this : In Zion God is known, there He is praised and worshipt. He is the hearer of prayer ; that is His very character, and therefore all flesh comes to Him. All who feel their weakness, all who need help and grace, seek it at His hand. It is true that they who thus come, come with the burden of sin upon them : their iniquities rise up in all their strength and might, and would thrust them away from the presence of the Holy

One. But He Himself, in the plenitude of His mercy, covers those iniquities, will not look upon them, and so suffers sinners to approach Him. And how blessed are they who, reconciled and pardoned, are thus suffered to draw nigh ! Of that blessedness may we ourselves be partakers, may we be filled and satisfied therewith.

I. WAITETH, lit. "is silent," the word being used apparently metaphorically, in the sense of *resting* and so of *waiting*. So Diodati, "laude t'aspetta in Sion." The meaning is, as Calvin observes, that God is so

- 2 O Thou that hearest prayer,  
Unto Thee doth all flesh come.
- 3 Iniquities have prevailed against me ;  
(But) as for our transgressions, THOU coverest them.
- 4 Blessed is he whom thou choosest,  
And bringest near that he may dwell in Thy courts !  
So shall we be satisfied with the blessing of Thine  
house,

gracious to His people that he supplies them every day with fresh subject for praise. Others, however, explain it of the silence of the heart in devotion.

2. O THOU THAT HEAREST PRAYER. This is the very character of God. "He describes not what has once happened, but clothes God with this everlasting attribute (*perpetuo ornatus*), as though he said, God can no more be deaf to the prayers of His people than He can deny Himself."—*Calvin*.

UNTO THEE DOTH ALL FLESH COME. By *flesh* is meant man in his weakness and need, but the word scarcely includes here other animals. It is clear, however, that the privilege of access to God is not intended to be confined merely to the Israelites, or so general an expression would not have been chosen. It is again, as in the last verses, the statement of a fact, true generally, true so far as men pray at all.

Calvin and others, who render the verbs in the future, see here a prophecy of Christ's kingdom, and of the conversion of the heathen, as in Is. xlv. 23, 24. But the general tenour of the Psalm does not support this view.

3. INIQUITIES, lit. "things (or words) of iniquities."

HAVE PREVAILED, lit. "have been too strong for me." Comp. xl. 12. It is the remembrance of this which

brings up before the mind the one great obstacle to approach to God ; the next line telling us how that obstacle is removed. Calvin well explains : "Although our iniquities, as they deserve repulse, would cast us far from Thy sight, yet because Thou showest Thyself ready to be reconciled, they will not prevent the course of our prayers." Comp. Is. lix. 1, 2.

AGAINST ME. The pronoun of the first pers. sing. comes in somewhat abruptly. Del. thinks that the whole congregation here speak as one man. It is more probable that the Psalmist makes a personal application to himself of that which was true of all, putting his own guilt however in the first place, as Daniel also confessed his own sins first (Dan. ix. 20), and then those of the people.

THOU COVEREST. See on xxxii. 1. The pronoun is emphatic, as though to express the conviction that God, and God alone, could do this.

4. BLESSED. See notes on xv. 1, xxvii. 4. This blessedness is here felt especially as vouchsafed to God's *chosen*, as the privilege of Israel rather than of other nations ("Blessed is he whom Thou choosest"), and also as flowing from the *forgiving* love of God, who covers the transgressions which else would separate from Him even His chosen.

SO SHALL WE BE SATISFIED. "For all that God's grace offers us we can

## The holy place of Thy temple.

- II. 5 With terrible things in righteousness dost Thou  
 answer us, O God of our salvation,  
 Thou that art the trust of all the ends of the earth,  
 and of the sea afar off:  
 6 Who setteth fast the mountains by His strength,

give no better thanks than that we hunger and thirst after it, and that the poor empty soul be satisfied therewith."—*Delitzsch*.

THE HOLY PLACE OF THY TEMPLE, or perhaps, "with the holiness of Thy temple."

5. The Psalmist now approaches more nearly to his main subject : and first, he declares God's wonders on behalf of His people, wonders so great and so signal, that all the earth has been made to know that there is a God in Israel.

TERRIBLE THINGS (as elsewhere, "great things," "wondrous things"), commonly used of God's great acts wrought in behalf of Israel, especially in their deliverance out of Egypt. (Deut. x. 21 ; 2 Sam. vii. 23 ; Ps. cvi. 22, cxlv. 6, &c.)

DOST THOU ANSWER US, (not fut. "Thou  *wilt*  answer us," but) now, as at all times, when our need is sore ; IN RIGHTEOUSNESS (comp. Is. xlii. 6), that being the very foundation of God's moral government of the world, and that righteousness being manifested in the salvation of His people as in the overthrow of their enemies ; a cloud and darkness to these, but a light and defence to those.

TRUST. "The meaning is," says Venema, "that God is the most certain help and defence of men, whether He be acknowledged by them and trusted in or not." Tholuck thinks that the congregation, "lifting

up their hearts to the survey of God's wondrous works, declare the conviction that whatever of blessing and of consolation all the nations of the earth receive, issues from this source only, wherein is involved the confession, that all prayers of the heathen also, however perverted their ideas of the Deity may be, still in reality mount to the throne of the God of Israel." He then refers to the testimony of the Prophet Amos (ix. 7), that the same fatherly Hand which led Israel out of Egypt had also guided and blessed heathen nations. But here, as in ver 2, it is the *claim* of God to be thus recognised and trusted in, which is asserted. God is the Hearer of the prayers of all. He is the only object of trust, even though all do not pray to Him or trust in Him. As Luther well says : "One may run over the wide world, even to its utmost extremity, yet Thou art the only foundation on which the trust of a man's heart can rest." At the same time, there is an anticipation of a universal recognition and worship, such as could not but spring up in the hearts of those who were met together on such an occasion as this, to record God's wonderful works. In Ps. lxvii. this anticipation becomes more nearly predictive.

6, 7. Mountains and seas are not to be understood figuratively, but literally, the statement being that the same God who stills the earthquake

- Being girded about with might ;  
 7 Who stilleth the roaring of the seas,  
     The roaring of their waves,  
     And the tumult of the nations.  
 8 Therefore they that dwell in the ends (of the earth)  
     are afraid at Thy signs ;  
     Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and  
     evening to sing for joy.

III. 9 Thou hast visited the earth, and made it overflow,  
     Thou greatly enrichest it with the brook of God,  
     which is full of water ;

and hushes the storm gives peace also to contending kingdoms and nations. Both in the natural and the political world He rules. The *sea* and the *nations* are mentioned together, the one being so often used as an image of the other. See xlvii.

8. THEREFORE, lit. "and (accordingly) they have feared."

SIGNS. In like manner σημεῖον is used in the N. T. of miracles as "tokens and indications of the near presence and working of God."

OUTGOINGS, or rather *the places* where morning and evening have their birth ("les lieux d'où surgissent l'aube et le crépuscule," Perret-Gentil ; "portals," Kay), the East and West ; the meaning being, that all things, the inanimate as well as the animate creatures, from the rising to the setting of the sun, break forth into songs of joy before God.

Briefly, ver. 5—8 may be summed up thus : the whole wide world, its mountains and its seas, and all the dwellers in the world from one end of it to the other, are in the hand of God, wait upon Him, and He makes all to rejoice.

9. With this verse begins the

special subject of thanksgiving, the thanksgiving for the harvest. It is manifest, from the use of the *perfect tenses* in ver. 9, 11, 13, that this is not merely a general acknowledgement of God's goodness in bringing the fruits of the earth to maturity, but has reference to a particular season.

THOU HAST VISITED THE EARTH, or perhaps "the land." For this sense of the word "visit" Comp. Jer. xxvii. 22. On this Arnd. says : "The Holy Spirit makes use of a homely word when, in describing the fertilizing genial rain, he terms it a visiting of the earth. When a visit is made by rich and affectionate friends, they do not come empty, but bring with them a blessing or good gift to testify their favour and love. Thus, although God is over all, and fills heaven and earth, He does not at all times leave traces or marks of His presence. But when in time of drought He gives a gracious fertilizing shower, it is as if He paid us a visit, and brought along with Him a great blessing, that we might mark His love and goodness."

THE BROOK OF GOD, not as the Chald. and others "the clouds," but

- Thou preparest their corn,  
 For so dost Thou prepare it (*i.e.* the earth).  
 10 Thou waterest the furrows thereof abundantly,  
 Thou settlest the ridges thereof;  
 With showers of rain Thou makest it soft;  
 Thou blessest the increase of it.  
 11 Thou hast crowned the year with Thy goodness,  
 And Thy tracks drop fatness;  
 12 The pastures of the wilderness drop (therewith),  
 And with exulting the hills gird themselves.  
 13 The meadows are clothed with flocks,  
 The valleys also are covered over with corn :  
 They shout together, yea they sing.

rather "the rain." The Arabs have the same expression. Schultens quotes from *Hist. Tamerl.*, p. 82, the Arabic proverb: "When the river of God comes, the river Isa (in Bagdad) ceases." It is the heavenly stream as opposed to earthly streams; called a *brook* or *channel* (see on i. 3) with reference to the irrigation of the land by means of such. It is full of water, whereas the wells which men dig, the channels which they cut, dry up and cease to flow.

The repetition of the verb *prepare* seems designed to mark that all is God's doing. He prepares the earth, and so prepares the corn.

So, *i.e.* by sending the rain. The present tenses are employed here to express that this God does not in one year only, but every year.

10. SETTLEST, lit. "pressest down," describing vividly the effect of a rich and abundant rain. The same word is used of *bending* a bow in xviii. 34, where see note. The *ridges* are the lines of earth thrown up by the action of the plough between the *furrows*.

11. WITH THY GOODNESS. Another rendering, "Thou hast crowned the year of Thy goodness," gives no bad sense. The year of God's goodness would mean the year in which it had been emphatically displayed (comp. Is. lxi. 2); and this might be said to be crowned with the harvest.

THY TRACKS, prop. *marks of the chariot-wheels*. Comp. xviii. 10, Deut. xxxiii. 26, Is. lxvi. 15.

12. THE PASTURES OF THE WILDERNESS. Comp. Job xxxviii. 26, 27. But the wilderness does not mean a bare desert, as the word "pastures" shows; it is merely contrasted with the cultivated arable land.

13. THE MEADOWS. See note on xxxvii. 20.

THEY SHOUT TOGETHER, striving, as it were, and vying with one another in their gladness; as the reflexive form of the verb denotes. Nothing can be more beautiful, or more truly poetical, than the figure by which the valleys waving with corn are said themselves to shout and sing.



## PSALM LXVI.

THE Poet celebrates God's great deeds on behalf of His people, and calls upon all nations to join in thanksgiving to Him. From the language of verses 8—12, the Psalm would seem to have been composed on the occasion of some special deliverance, but the expressions used are too general to lead to any certain conclusion as to the time when it was written. But it has been supposed, with some probability, that the allusion is to the defeat of the Assyrians under Sennacherib. Others refer it to the return from the Babylonish Captivity; others, again, to the times of the Maccabees.

In ver. 13, there is a sudden and remarkable change from the use of the plural to the use of the singular. Some would explain this on the principle that the people are personified, and therefore speak in the singular. This, however, is very unnatural; no probable reason can be given for such a personification. It is far more likely that the Sacred Poet, after having spoken for the whole congregation, speaks for himself as one of that congregation, declaring with thanksgiving God's goodness to himself, felt and acknowledged by himself, as well as to all Israel. In fact, as the Psalm was clearly intended for the public worship of the Temple, the former part was probably designed to be sung by the whole choir of Levites and the latter by a single voice.

The Psalm consists of five strophes, three of them being distinguished by the *Selah* at the close :—

I. The exhortation addressed to the whole world to give glory to God. Ver. 1—4.

II. The recounting of God's great acts on behalf of His people in times past. Ver. 5—7.

III. The wonderful deliverance recently vouchsafed. Ver. 8—12.

IV. The Psalmist himself promises to bring large offerings to God in grateful acknowledgement of His goodness. Ver. 13—15.

V. He calls upon all to hear the story of God's mercy to himself, and especially of His answer to his prayer. Ver. 16—20.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A SONG. A PSALM.\*]

- I. 1 SHOUT unto God, all the earth !  
 2 Sing the glory of His Name,  
     Ascribe to Him glory, in His praise.  
 3 Say unto God, "How terrible is Thy work !  
     Because of the greatness of Thy strength do Thine  
     enemies feign allegiance unto Thee.  
 4 In all the earth they bow down unto Thee and sing  
     to Thee ;  
     They sing Thy Name." [Selah.]
- II. 5 Come and see the acts of God :  
     Terrible (He is in) His doing concerning the  
     children of men.

2. ASCRIBE, &c., lit. "Make glory His praise," *i.e.* in giving Him praise ascribe to Him that glory which is His. The two nouns are in apposition with one another. Comp. Joshua vii. 19, Is. xlii. 12.

3. SAY UNTO GOD. He now gives the reason why God should be praised, and he would have this acknowledgment addressed directly to God, in order to stir and rouse the hearts of those who uttered it the more effectually : "for nothing so compels us to a due reverence towards God, as when we place ourselves before His face."—*Calvin*.

HOW TERRIBLE. Comp. the song of the heavenly harpers, Rev. xv. 3.

FEIGN ALLEGIANCE, *i.e.* do so in a forced and reluctant manner, though they would willingly withdraw their necks from the yoke if they could. Lit. "*lie* unto Thee," whence the P. B. V. "shall be found liars unto

Thee." The E.V. has here, and in xviii. 44, where the same word occurs, "shall submit themselves," and in the margin in both places "yield feigned obedience," which is doubtless the true rendering.

There is perhaps a tacit comparison implied. If even His enemies must render a forced and tardy and hypocritical submission, what should they do to whom He has manifested Himself in love?

4. BOW DOWN. It is unnecessary to render the verbs as futures of prediction. Faith boldly brings the future into the present, and sees that as already accomplished which is so in the purpose and will of God. Not Zion only, but the whole earth is the temple of God, wherein His praises are sung.

5. COME AND SEE. Comp. xlvii.  
 8. The dull hearts of men must be

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\* A Psalm. The addition of the word Psalm in the Hebrew would probably denote an accompaniment of instrumental music.

- 6 He turned the sea into dry land,  
 They passed through the river on foot :—  
 There let us rejoice in Him !
- 7 Ruling in His might for ever,  
 His eyes keep watch upon the nations ;  
 As for the rebellious—let them not exalt themselves. [Selah.]

- III. 8 Bless our God, O ye peoples,  
 And make the voice of His praise to be heard.
- 9 Who putteth our soul in life,  
 And hath not suffered our foot to be moved.
- 10 For Thou didst prove us, O God,  
 Thou didst fine us, as silver is fined.
- 11 Thou broughtest us into the net,  
 Thou didst put a heavy burden on our loins.

roused, their attention excited ; the exhortation implying also that *fresh* acts of God's power and grace are to be beheld.

6. Faith makes the past as well as the future her own. The God who has now wrought wonders for His people is the same who once led them dryshod through the Red Sea and through the Jordan. Those miracles of the past recur in the present. That ancient story is not the record merely of a bygone age, but is daily new, daily repeats itself to those who have eyes open to see and hearts open to perceive. Hence the Psalmist says :

THERE LET US REJOICE IN HIM !  
*There*, pointing as it were to the field in which God had made bare His arm, and where the past history had been repeated in the present, *there* let us rejoice in Him.

7. KEEP WATCH or "spy out."  
 All the attempts of the nations against Israel are not unobserved

of God : hence the warning which follows.

THE REBELLIOUS, *i.e.* the heathen nations who threaten Israel, and so lift themselves up against God.

8. Again he calls upon all nations to bless God for His wonderful deliverance vouchsafed to His people. Then he describes their oppression.

9. WHO PUTTETH OUR SOUL IN LIFE. The expression denotes the being rescued from imminent peril, like the phrase "bringing up from the gates of death," &c.

10. The suffering of Israel is now described by a series of figures, the first of which marks *God's purpose* in the affliction.

THOU DIDST PROVE, &c. Comp. xii. 6, xvii. 3.

11. THE NET. Probably here and in Ezek. xii. 13, this is the meaning of the word. It occurs, however, often in the sense of a *hold*, or *strong, fortified place*, as in 1 Sam. xxii. 5, xxiv. 22, &c. Hence many take it

- 12 Thou madest men to ride over our head ;  
 We came into fire and into water :—  
 But Thou broughtest us out to abundance.

- IV. 13 I will come into Thy house with burnt-offerings,  
 I will pay Thee my vows,  
 14 Which my lips openly uttered,  
 And my mouth spake when I was in distress.  
 15 Burnt-offerings of fatlings will I offer to Thee  
 With the incense of rams ;  
 I will sacrifice bullocks with goats. [Selah.]

- V. 16 Come, hear, and let me tell, all ye that fear God,  
 What He hath done for my soul.  
 17 I called unto Him with my mouth,  
 And he was extolled with my tongue.  
 18 If I had regarded iniquity in my heart,  
 The Lord would not hear me.

here to mean *prison, siege*, &c. Similarly, Luther and Hupfeld. They had been like wild animals taken by the hunter in the toils, or like beasts of burden on whose loins a heavy load was laid (an image of servitude) ; they had been, as it were, cast down and trampled upon by the horse hoofs and chariot wheels of their triumphant and savage enemies.

13. We have now the *personal* acknowledgement of God's mercy, first in the announcement on the part of the Psalmist of the offerings which he is about to bring, and which he had vowed in his trouble ; and then, in the record of God's dealing with his soul, which had called forth his thankfulness.

14. OPENLY UTTERED, literally "opened," used in like manner of vows, Judges xi. 35.

15. INCENSE, *i.e.* evidently the steam and smoke of the burnt sa-

crifices ascending in a cloud, the word being used in its root-meaning. The enumeration of the various kinds of offerings may be an expression of his zeal and devotion, or as denoting that he considered no offerings too large or too cost'y.

17. HE WAS EXTOLLED, lit. "extolling was under my tongue."

18. IF I HAD SEEN, *i.e.* probably, if I had been conscious of iniquity in my heart, the assertion being that of freedom from anything like purposed deceit, as in xvii. 1, xxxii. 2 ; or the phrase may mean, as the English Version takes it, "If I had *regarded* iniquity," *i.e.* looked upon it with pleasure and satisfaction. For the general sentiment of the passage, comp. Job xxvii. 8, 9 ; Is. i. 15. lix. 2, 3 ; John ix. 31 ; 1 John iii. 21. See South's Sermon on this verse, vol. iv. p. 118.

- 19 But surely God hath heard,  
     He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.  
 20 Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my  
     prayer  
     Nor His loving kindness from me.
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## PSALM LXVII.

THIS Psalm, which, like the last, is anonymous, is evidently much later than the age of David, though it might have been composed either in the time of Hezekiah, when great hopes began to be entertained of God's purposes towards the nation, or at a time subsequent to the return from the Exile, when those hopes were so signally revived. The Psalm is not, properly speaking, a prophecy, if by that be understood a prediction: it is rather the fervent expression of a well-grounded hope. It is the joyful outpouring of a heart which longs to see the God and King of Israel acknowledged and worshipt as the God and King of the world.

The Psalm, which was clearly designed for liturgical use, and may have been written, like the 65th, at the time of the gathering in of the harvest (see ver. 6), opens with words borrowed from the blessing of the High Priest in Numb. vi. 24—26. That this is not an *expansion* of the words of the Psalm, and that the Psalmist *alludes* to the blessing of the High Priest, is quite evident. That a Psalm designed for the Temple service should be built upon the solemn Priestly Blessing so often heard in the Temple, a Blessing thrice repeated (comp. ver. 1, 6, 7), is natural and easily explicable. That the Psalm should have suggested the formula of the Blessing is extremely improbable. Besides, in three other Psalms we have allusions to the same formula, iv. 6, xxxi. 16, and the thrice-repeated refrain in lxxx. Who can believe that the Blessing was composed out of these passages? Psalm lxxx. was written long after David's time, and it is evident that all the expressions in the Psalms are

borrowed from the one original in Numbers. The only conclusion is that a later writer uses deliberately the name Elohim instead of the name Jehovah. The Psalm is marked by the refrain, ver. 3 and 5, but has no strophical division properly so called.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. ON STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM.  
A SONG.]

- 1 GOD be gracious unto us and bless us,  
And make his face to shine among us. [Selah.]
- 2 That Thy way may be known upon earth,  
Thy salvation among all the heathen.
- 3 Let the peoples give thanks to Thee, O God,  
Let all the peoples give thanks unto Thee.
- 4 Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
For Thou judgest the peoples with equity,  
And Thou guidest the nations upon earth. [Selah.]

1. Borrowed, as has already been observed, from the High Priest's blessing, Numb. vi. 24—26, but with some variations, and with the Divine Name Elohim instead of Jehovah.

AMONG US, lit. "*with us*," as accompanying and guiding us, instead of "upon us," as in Numb. vi.

2. THAT THY WAY MAY BE KNOWN. The infin. is used impersonally. Lit. "to know," *i.e.* that men may know. God's goodness manifested in Israel would lead to a recognition of Him among the heathen as the Lord of all. Comp. ix. 11. God's *way* is His purpose of grace, His salvation as vouchsafed first to Israel and afterwards to the world.

THE HEATHEN. I have so rendered here the word elsewhere rendered *nations*, in order to represent

the three *different* Hebrew words employed in this and the next two verses; *heathen*, *peoples*, *nations*.

3—5. The only real difficulty in interpreting this Psalm is in determining how the tenses are used. In ver. 1 all are agreed that there is the expression of a wish, and that the verbs there are consequently optatives. But from ver. 3 onwards, interpretations vary. Some render these verbs as optatives, others as presents, others again as futures. But in so short a Psalm, opening with a wish, and, as the majority of critics are agreed, concluding with a wish, it seems to me most probable that we have the expression of a wish throughout.

3. LET ALL, &c., lit. "Let the peoples, all of them," and so again in ver. 5.

4. THOU GUIDEST. The verb is

- 5 Let the peoples give thanks to Thee, O God,  
     Let all (the) people give thanks to Thee!  
 6 The land hath given her increase :  
     May God, (even) our own God, bless us!  
 7 May God bless us,  
     And all the ends of the earth fear Him!

the same as in xxiii. 3, God being the great Shepherd of all nations.

6. HATH GIVEN. The verb is in the past tense, and would seem to refer to a recent harvest, or to a year of plenty. Many, however (as the E. V.), understand this as the prophetic past, which is often used

instead of a future. Others again, as Ewald and Zunz, render it as a present. The expression occurs again in lxxxv. 12, in Lev. xxvi. 4, and in Ezek. xxxiv. 27.

7. The Psalm closes with the same hope and longing for the blessing of God with which it opened.

## PSALM LXVIII.

THE subject of this grand hymn is the entry of God into His sanctuary on Zion. This is described under figures borrowed from the triumph of an earthly conqueror, who, after having vanquished his enemies, and taken possession of their country, marches in solemn procession at the head of his troops, to occupy the city which he has selected as his capital and the seat of empire. God is represented, first as advancing at the head of the Israelites through the desert; then as leading them victoriously into Canaan; and finally as fixing His royal abode on Zion, whence He reigns in the majesty of universal dominion, acknowledged and feared by all the nations of the earth. Such is, briefly, an outline of the Psalm.

The methods of interpreting it, however, are various.

I. The Fathers, and most of the older theologians, hold the Psalm to be Messianic. Christ and the great facts of His history, especially His resurrection and ascension, and dominion at the right hand of the Father, and the victory of the Church over the world, are by them

supposed to be here foreshadowed, in accordance with St. Paul's citation of the Psalm in Ephes. iv. 8—11.

i. By many of them, indeed, the Psalm is regarded as a direct prophecy of Christ and His Kingdom, and devoid altogether of any reference to events occurring at the time it was written. Thus they explain its several portions as describing the advent of Christ (ver. 1—6); His doctrine (ver. 7—16); His triumphant ascent into heaven (ver. 17, 18); and His dominion and kingdom (ver. 19—35).

ii. Others more reasonably maintain a first reference to the historical circumstances of the time, and then apply the Psalm, either in whole or in part, typically to Christ.

II. But even those who contend that the Psalm is to be explained, in the first instance, by a reference to the circumstances under which it was composed, are very much divided in their opinions.

i. The majority of interpreters suppose it to have been written at the time when the Ark was removed from the house of Obed-Edom to Mount Zion, 2 Sam. vi.

ii. Others again, from the martial character of the Psalm, conceive that it was written at the successful termination of some war, when the Ark, which had accompanied the army to battle, was brought back to the holy mountain.

iii. Still the question remains, *what* victory is here commemorated? Of those who refer the Psalm to David's time, some think that it was composed after David's victory over the Syrians and Edomites, 2 Sam. viii. Others, after that over the Syrians and Ammonites, 2 Sam. xi. xii.

iv. Another class of commentators hold that later victories are here alluded to, because of the mention of the Temple (ver. 29); either that of Jehoshaphat and Jehoram over Moab and Edom, 2 Kings iii. (so Hitzig); or that of Hezekiah over the Assyrians (so Kimchi); or finally, even those of the Maccabees, after the consecration of the Temple, 1 Macc. v.

v. Others find in the Psalm not so much the celebration of a particular historical event, as the expression of a general idea, clothed in a lyrical form.

vi. Gesenius, Ewald, and Hupfeld, all refer the Psalm to the return from the Babylonish Captivity. Ewald expressly connects it with the dedication of the Second Temple, for which he thinks it was written, and when it was probably sung. Both he and Hupfeld



consider that the second occupation of Canaan is described under figures borrowed from the first. But the latter sees in the language of the Psalm rather the promise than the accomplishment of the return from Babylon. The march of God with His people through the Arabian wilderness is, he says, made use of by the Poet as a type and pledge of their speedy deliverance and restoration to their own land.

It will be seen from this bare enumeration that there is the greatest difference of opinion both as to the occasion for which, and the period at which, the Psalm was written : some regarding it as one of the later, or even of the very latest of Hebrew poems ; and others classing it with the very earliest. One set of critics sees in it every evidence of antiquity and originality ; another sees in it every mark of a late age, and a great absence of originality. All, however, combine in praising its vigour, its life, its splendour ; all recognise in it the work of a poet of no ordinary genius.

III. It remains for us to consider how far the allusions in the Psalm itself may help us to determine its age, and the occasion for which it was composed.

First, then, it is clear that the great central idea of the Psalm is the choice of Zion as the dwelling-place of Jehovah. To this all leads ; from this all flows.

Secondly, this fact of itself would lead us to fix upon the age of David as the most probable time for the composition of the Psalm, and the removal of the Ark to Zion as the most probable occasion. Nor is this set aside by the reference to the "Temple" in ver. 28, inasmuch as the word here usually rendered *Temple* is a word also applied to the Tabernacle (see note on Psalm v. 7) at Shiloh.

Thirdly, the mention of the four tribes, Benjamin, Judah, Zabulun, and Naphtali, as representatives of the Southern and Northern kingdoms respectively, seems more natural then than at any later period. There does not appear to be in ver. 27 any prophetic anticipation of a restoration of the kingdom, and the reunion of the tribes as of old, such as Hupfeld is obliged to assume. "After the Captivity," says Hengstenberg, "there could be no such thing as the distinct tribes of Zabulun and Naphtali, with their princes."

Fourthly, the peculiar manner in which the tribe of Benjamin is introduced, as "little Benjamin their ruler," does not seem suitable

to post-Exile times, but is very naturally to be explained at a time shortly subsequent to the death of Saul. The tribe which had been the royal tribe, and had so lately enjoyed the pre-eminence in Israel, might still be honoured with the title of "ruler."

Fifthly, Egypt and Ethiopia are mentioned evidently as the great nations of the world, then occupying the most prominent position. It would seem, then, that the Psalm must have been written before the great Asiatic monarchies, the Assyrian especially, had become formidable.

So far then as the historical allusions of the Psalm are concerned, the evidence is, on the whole, in favour of the age of David rather than of a much later period.

The general structure of the Psalm, notwithstanding all the difficulties which beset many portions of it, is clear and well defined. It consists of the following divisions (which rest on the common principle of pairs of verses):—

I. An introduction which, with true lyric animation, sets before us the victorious march of God, the deliverances He has accomplished for His people, and the loud exultation to which they are called in consequence. Ver. 1—6.

II. Then follows a glance at the former history—the journey of Israel through the wilderness, under the immediate guidance and care of God. Ver. 7—10.

III. The triumphant occupation of the land of Canaan, and the flight of the hostile kings. Ver. 11—14.

IV. The choice of Zion as the abode of God, and His solemn entry into it. Ver. 15—18.

V. The Psalmist contemplating the glorious results of this abode of God in Zion, calls upon all Israel to praise Him, chiefly because He will punish all the enemies of His people. Ver. 19—23.

VI. The next strophe reverts to a description of the triumphant procession. Ver. 24—27.

VII. The hope is expressed that all the nations of the world shall acknowledge and submit themselves to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion. Ver. 28—31.

VIII. The Psalm closes with a summons to all the kingdoms of the earth to praise God. Ver. 32—35.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID. A SONG.]

- I. 1 LET God arise, let His enemies be scattered,  
And let them that hate Him flee before His face.
- 2 As smoke is driven away, do Thou drive them away ;  
As wax melteth before the fire,  
So let the wicked perish from before the face of  
God.
- 3 But let the righteous rejoice, let them exult before God,  
And let them be glad with joy.
- 4 Sing unto God, play (on the harp) to His Name,  
Cast up a highway for Him who rideth through the  
deserts :  
Whose name is Jah, and exult before Him.

1. As the last Psalm opened with a reference to the High Priest's blessing, Numb. vi. 24, so this opens with a reference to the watchword, Numb. x. 35, with which the Ark was wont to set forward during the journeys in the wilderness. "Rise up, O Jehovah, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thy face."

"I cannot doubt," says Calvin, "that Moses dictated this form of prayer for all ages, in order that the faithful, relying on the Ark of the covenant as the visible symbol of God's presence, might rest sure that they would be safe."

2. The figures here employed occur elsewhere; comp. xxxvii. 20, xcvii. 5, Hosea xiii. 3, and Micah i. 4. They describe forcibly the real weakness, the easy and instantaneous overthrow, of the strongest earthly power when arrayed against God.

In the last member of this verse, and the first of the next, Hengstenberg sees a reference to the conclusion of the song of Deborah: "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord, but

let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

3. THE RIGHTEOUS. Here, Israel as a nation regarded in its ideal character, and as placed in contrast with its heathen oppressors, "the wicked." Comp. Habak. ii. 4.

4. The first part of the Introduction ends with the last verse, and perhaps a second chorus here takes up the strain.

CAST UP A HIGHWAY; the figure being borrowed from the custom of Eastern monarchs, who sent heralds and pioneers before them to make all the necessary preparations—to remove obstructions, &c. along the route which they intended to follow. Great military roads were mostly the work of the Romans, and were almost unknown before the Persian and Grecian periods. Comp. Is. xl. 3, lvii. 14, lxii. 10, where the same verb, or the noun formed from it, occurs.

WHO RIDETH, said perhaps with allusion to the cherubim on which Jehovah was borne (xviii. 10), God Himself being the Leader and Captain of His people, riding as it were

- 5 A Father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,  
Is God in His holy habitation.  
6 God maketh the solitary to keep house ;  
He bringeth forth the prisoners into prosperity :  
Only the rebellious abide in a land of drought.

at their head, as an earthly captain might lead his army, riding on a war-horse.

THE DESERTS, or "sandy steppes" (as in Is. xl. 3), such as those on both sides of the Jordan over against Jericho, and the Arabian deserts to the south and east. The allusion is, in the first instance, to the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness, or Arabah, though, supposing the Psalm to be post-Exile, there would be a further reference to the deserts lying between Babylon and Palestine. The word cannot mean *heavens*, as the Targ. and Talmud (led astray, probably, by the similar figure in Deut. xxxiii. 26) ; nor *the West*, as the LXX. and the Vulg. render it. The former is found in our P.B.V., "magnify Him that rideth upon the heavens, as it were upon a horse," which is the more remarkable, as that Version usually follows the Vulg. and the German. Here it departs from both. The words "as it were upon a horse," were added, I presume, as a further explanation of the verb "rideth." I can discover nothing answering to them in any of the Ancient Versions.

5. The character and attributes of God, and His gracious dealings with His people, are now alleged as the reason why He should be praised. The "fatherless" and the "widows" are mentioned as examples of those who most need succour and protection. As Arndt says : "The meaning of the Holy Ghost is, that God the Lord is a gracious, friendly God and

King, whose first, highest, and principal work it is to give most attention to the *miserabiles personæ*, that is, to those persons who ought to be most pitied, because they are helpless and comfortless. Great potentates in the world do not act thus ; they respect the noblest and richest in the land, the men who may adorn their court and strengthen their power and authority. But the highest glory of God is to compassionate the miserable." God is both the loving *Father* and the righteous *Judge* : and the several classes of the lonely, the destitute, the oppressed, the captives, are mentioned as so many instances of those who have experienced both His care and His righteousness, in order that from these the conclusion may be drawn in all similar cases. Hengstenberg compares Hos. xiv. 3, "With Thee the fatherless findeth mercy ;" and therefore all who need mercy.

IN HIS HOLY HABITATION, *i.e.* heaven, not the earthly sanctuary (comp. xi. 4), "in opposition to the earth, as the seat of unrighteousness and coldness of heart." (Hengst.)

6. THE SOLITARY . . . THE PRISONERS. Those who hold that the Psalm was written subsequently to the Babylonish Captivity, see in these words an allusion to the actual circumstances of Israel during the Exile. But it is more natural to suppose that these are mentioned as other particular examples, like the orphan and the widow, of God's fatherly care.

ONLY, here almost = *but*. It may

- II. 7 O God, when Thou wentest forth before Thy people,  
When Thou marchedst through the wilderness,  
[Selah]  
8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped before God,  
Yon Sinai before God, the God of Israel.  
9 With a bountiful rain Thou didst sprinkle Thine  
inheritance, O God,  
And when it was weary, THOU didst refresh it ;  
10 Thy creatures dwelt therein ;  
Thou preparest in Thy goodness for the afflicted,  
O God.

be explained, "it is not otherwise than thus." Comp. lviii. 11. THE REBELLIOUS ; all enemies of God, whether heathen, or those who in Israel itself were disobedient.

7. The proper theme of the Psalm now opens with allusions to the great triumphal march of God at the head of His people through the wilderness, and in their occupation of the land of Canaan.

The words of this and the next verse are borrowed, with some variations, from the song of Deborah, Judges v. 4, 5, and this again rests on passages such as Deut. xxxiii. 2, and Ex. xix. 16, &c. Comp. Habak. iii. 3. The reference is first to the terrors of the Theophany on Sinai, and the glorious Majesty of God as there seen.

WENTEST FORTH . . . MARCHEDST, words used especially of going forth to battle, God being regarded as the Captain of His people. Comp. xlv. 9, lxxxi. 5 ; Numb. xxvii. 17, 21 ; Habak. iii. 13 ; Zech. xiv. 3.

THE WILDERNESS (or "waste"), as lxxviii. 40, cvi. 14. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 10 ; Is. xliii. 19, 20.

Throughout their whole march God's Presence and Glory were manifested, but never so awfully as when He came down on Sinai, to give His Law to His people. Then all nature

was moved at His coming ; then, "so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceeding fear and quake" (Heb. xii. 21). Hence it is that the great prominence is given to *this* manifestation of God. And hence He is here called "the God of Israel," because from Sinai dates God's covenant relation to Israel, as Delitzsch observes.

8. YON SINAI (the demonstrative pron. prefixed, as in xlviii. 14). Some verb must be supplied, "shook," "was moved," from the first member of the verse. The original passage, Judges v. 5, contains the full expression.

9. A BOUNTIFUL RAIN, lit. either "a rain of free-willingness," which has hence been interpreted to mean rain as a gift of free grace (so Calv.), or "a rain of liberality," *i.e.* as a liberal, bountiful gift. There have been various interpretations given, some understanding this rain spiritually, and others literally ; but to me it seems certain that the expression is used figuratively of refreshment and blessing ; this appears, indeed, to be required by the following clause : "And when it was weary," &c.

REFRESH ; literally, "confirm," "strengthen."

10. THY CREATURES. I have left the word in the ambiguity of the

## III. 11 The Lord giveth the word :

The women who publish the tidings are a great host.

12 "Kings of hosts do flee, do flee,  
And she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil.

original. Three different interpretations have been given of it.

(1) If the *rain* spoken of in ver. 9 be *the manna*, then *the creatures* here spoken of may be *the quails*; "Thy living creatures settled therein" (*i.e.* in Thine inheritance, among Thy people, comp. lxxviii. 28, "in the midst of the camp"); with which the *rest* of the verse corresponds, "Thou preparedst (them, as food, see the same verb, lxxv. 9, lxxviii. 20) for the afflicted" (*i.e.* Thy people in their distress).

(2) Others take the word here in the meaning "host," or troop, (as in 2 Sam. xxiii. 11, 13, where it is used of an *army*), *i.e.* the congregation, or people of Israel.

(3) But it may also mean Israel in another sense, *viz.* as compared to a  *flock*, a favourite image in the Psalms: "Thy afflicted creatures," which, however, might be rendered in accordance with (2), "the congregation of Thy afflicted ones."

THOU PREPAREST. The word may be used here absolutely, = "Thou preparest a table," as in 1 Chron. xii. 39, and it need not be rendered as a past, as referring to the provision in the wilderness; rather, that is one of *many repeated instances* of God's care; and we have consequently the statement of a general truth.

11. The Sacred Poet now passes to the actual occupation of the Holy Land.

THE LORD (ADONAI) GIVETH (THE) WORD. The noun "word" (which is found only in poetry) is used in lxxvii. 8, of the "word of *pro-*

*mise*;" in Habak. iii. 9, apparently of the "word of *power*," or "word of victory." Perhaps both meanings may be combined here. It is in virtue of God's word of promise that Israel takes possession of Canaan; it is by His word of power that the enemies of Israel are discomfited. "God speaks—and the victory is won." Others render "song of victory," God Himself putting this into the mouths of the women, who came forth with timbrels and dances to meet the victorious army on its return.

THE WOMEN. The participle is in the feminine, and the allusion is to the custom above mentioned. The deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh's host, the overthrow of Sisera, and David's victory over Goliath, were all thus celebrated. Comp. Exod. xv. 20; Judges v. 1, 12; 1 Sam. xviii. 6; 2 Sam. i. 20.

12. This and the next two verses wear the air of being a fragment of one of those ancient battle-songs sung by the women after the defeat of the foe. The fact that they have thus been torn from their original context accounts for the great obscurity which hangs over them. It is indeed almost hopeless now to understand the allusions.

KINGS OF HOSTS, not those defeated by Moses, as the kings of the Amorites, but, as the reference to the song of Deborah clearly shows, the Canaanitish kings, Judg. v. 19, and vii. 25.

SHE THAT TARRIETH AT HOME; the mistress of the household, so

13 Will ye lie among the sheep-folds,  
As the wings of a dove that is covered with silver,  
And her feathers with yellow gold?—

called as keeping house, whilst her husband goes forth to battle. An expression peculiarly in conformity with Eastern customs. Similar is the phrase "women in the tent," Judges v. 24.

DIVIDETH THE SPOIL, not merely "receives her portion of the spoil," but rather "distributes among her daughters and handmaidens, &c. the share of the spoil" which her husband has brought home. Hence the mother of Sisera is represented as anticipating the share of the spoil which would fall to her lot, Judg. v. 30, "one coloured garment, two pieces of embroidery as spoil for my neck" (so, with a very slight correction, the passage should probably be rendered).

13, 14. Scarcely two commentators will be found to agree as to the interpretation of these verses. The only point on which there can be said to be anything like a consensus is in the explanation of the figure in ver. 13. Nearly all see, in the dove and the glittering of her wings in the sunshine, an emblem of prosperity and peace, though some suppose that the allusion is to the bright armour of the warriors, glittering in the sunshine. Cf. the same figure in Soph. *Antig.* 114, λευκῆς χιτῶνος πτέρυγι στεγανός.

According to Hengstenberg, the Israelites, to whom the address is directed, are described figuratively as the wings of the doves, &c., or they are *like* doves whose wings glitter with silver and gold. The allusion is to the play of colours on the wings of the dove in sunshine. This denotes the peaceful, and, at the same time, *splendid* condition enjoyed by

Israel, in the lap of prosperity. The same idea is carried out in the second figure, that of the *snow*, an image of the bright gleam of heaven which fell on the darkened land on the prosperous termination of the war;—when the Lord scatters kings, the light of prosperity illuminates the darkness of the land, just as dark Zalmon becomes white when covered with snow. He observes that snow is generally used as an image of brightness and purity. Comp. li. 7. Is. i. 18, Mark ix. 3 (with Matt. xvii. 2), Rev. i. 14. Zalmon is a hill mentioned in Judges ix. 48, situated in the neighbourhood of Shechem, and covered with a thick wood, so that, as Luther says, "it might be called in German a *Schwarzwald*, or dark forest, the dark or black mountain." This interpretation, amongst many that have been given, is, on the whole, preferable to any of the others. It has the merit of simplicity, and it yields a fairly satisfactory sense. I would venture, however, to suggest another explanation of ver. 14. It seems to me, as Ewald has remarked, that this verse is rather in opposition to the preceding, than a continuation of the same idea. The first describes the sunshine of peace; the second the storm of war. May not then the comparison of the snow refer to the *scattering* of the kings? May not those kings and their armies, broken and scattered far and wide over the land, be aptly compared to the white patches of snow, lying in broken masses over the dark boughs on the forest? "When the Almighty scattered kings in the land, it was like a fall of snow on (darkly-wooded) Zalmon." The comparison becomes

- 14 When the Almighty scatters kings therein,  
(It is as when) it snoweth in Zalmon."

IV. 15 A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan,  
A mountain of many summits is the mountain  
of Bashan.

- 16 Why look ye enviously, ye many-peaked mountains,  
Upon the mountain which God hath desired to  
dwell in?

Yea, Jehovah will abide therein for ever.

- 17 The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, are  
thousands upon thousands,

still more strikingly apt when we remember how the arms and armour, and rich spoil, dashed here and there in the wild disorder of the flight, would *glitter* like snow in the sunshine.

14. THEREIN, *i.e.* in the land, implied, though not expressed, in what goes before.

ZALMON, or "the dark mountain," probably, as already remarked, the hill mentioned in Judges ix. 48, the only other passage where the word occurs.

15. The end of all this manifestation of God's power on behalf of His chosen, of all these splendid victories, is the occupation of the Holy Land. He has given it to His people that He may abide and reign in the midst of them. He has chosen, not the lofty range of Bashan, but the more lowly Zion for His seat: and to this new Sanctuary He comes from Sinai, attended by "an innumerable company of angels."

A MOUNTAIN OF GOD (not merely "a high mountain," see on xxxvi. 6). The huge range of Bashan, with its sharp pillars and sharp pinnacles (its "many peaks"), is so termed, as if bearing witness in a special manner, by its strong massive formation, to the power of Him who created it. (The basalt, or *basanites* of the an-

cients, has been supposed to take its name from Bashan, where it is found). This stood in the most striking contrast to the limestone formation and unimposing character of the hills of Central Palestine. These bold mountain masses, rising in dark majesty, and producing the impression of everlasting strength, stand on one side, while on the other is placed the small and apparently insignificant Zion, having no greatness or strength in itself, but great and strong nevertheless in the immediate and glorious Presence of God; and hence the former seem to look with envy upon the latter at seeing it thus elevated to a height to which it had no natural claim. Comp. xlviii. 2, Is. ii. 2. Others, again, suppose that Bashan is styled "a mountain of God" as an ancient seat of religious worship.

17. In solemn triumph, at the head of armies of angels, and like a victor who leads trains of captives and spoils in long array, God enters His sanctuary in Zion.

CHARIOTS (the sing. used collectively), *i.e.* war-chariots (comp. xx. 7); carrying out the image, as in Habak. iii. 8, 15. The angelic hosts are evidently meant. Comp. 2 Kings vi. 17.

TWICE TEN THOUSAND, lit. "two



The Lord among them (hath come from) Sinai into  
His sanctuary.

18 Thou hast ascended up on high,  
Thou hast led captives captive,  
Thou hast taken gifts amongst men :  
Yea, with the rebellious also, shall Jah God  
abide.

myriads." Comp. Deut. xxxiii. 2 (where the angels are spoken of as "holy myriads"); Dan. vii. 10. These angels may be meant also in Numb. x. 36 (the passage borrowed in ver. 1, and perhaps alluded to here), "Return, O Jehovah, with the myriads of the thousands of Israel."

THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS, lit. "thousands of repetition."

18. THOU HAST ASCENDED. Comp. xlvii. 5. Whither? Not, I think, as many interpreters explain, into heaven; for though that is the meaning of the passage in its N. T. application (see below), it is not, apparently, the primary meaning. Here, as we have seen, the triumphant procession winds its way up the sacred hill of Zion. The ascent, therefore, can be none other than the ascent of the Ark into the tabernacle, or temple there.

ON HIGH. See for this, as applied to Zion, Jer. xxxi. 12, Ezek. xvii. 23, xx. 40.

CAPTIVES, lit. *a captivity*, i.e. a number of captives; the image being still carefully preserved of the victor, with his long train of captives following him in the triumph. The rendering of the E. V., "Thou hast led captivity captive," is ambiguous, as it might mean, "Thou hast led captive those who have led others captive," which, however, is not the meaning of the Heb. phrase (comp. Judges v. 12).

GIFTS, i.e. tribute from the vanquished; or rather, perhaps, from all those who submit themselves to His sway.

AMONGST MEN. This is the literal rendering (not "*for* men," i.e. to let them go free, nor *of* men, they themselves being the gifts, for the history of David knows nothing of "prisoners who were sent as gifts to the sanctuary," nor of "proselytes, who, as it were, gave themselves as gifts to God"); and, in the context in which it stands, is, of course, nearly the same as "*from* men."

THE REBELLIOUS. This completes the picture of the triumph. *All*—even those nations which hold out the longest in their stubborn resistance, and refuse to submit themselves to the great Victor—must finally acknowledge His sway. All shall be united in one kingdom, and God the Lord shall reign in the midst of them. This is the great prophetic idea which recurs so often in the writings of Psalmists and Prophets. God is the King of all the earth; and, in spite of all opposition, His kingdom shall be set up, and on the throne of that kingdom, His Son, His Anointed (the Messiah, the Christ), shall reign. Hence it is that St. Paul (Eph. iv. 8) applies this verse to the Resurrection and triumphant ascension of Christ. It is true that in so doing he has departed from the Heb. and from the LXX. The latter have: ἀναβὰς εἰς

V. 19 Blessed be the Lord

Who day by day beareth our burden,

Even the God who is our salvation. [Selah.]

20 The God who is unto us a God of deliverances,

ὁψος ἡμαλώτευσας αἰγματοσίην, ἔλαβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ γὰρ ἀπειθοῦντες τοῦ κατασκηνώσαι. The first clause of this—the only part of it which is intelligible—the Apostle retains, except that he substitutes the 3d pers. ἡμαλώτευσεν, for the 2d; but for the second clause he has: καὶ ἔδωκε δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, “and gave gifts unto men.” Hence he is giving, not a translation, but an interpretation of the Hebrew. For the Hebrew verb “to take” never means “to give.” We cannot, therefore, argue from the meaning of the word, but we may from the scope of the passage. The truth is, that the Apostle sees in the literal O. T. fact a higher spiritual significance. The ascent of the Ark, in which God was present, into Zion, prefigured the ascent of Christ into heaven. As God came down to fight for His people, so Christ had descended to this earth for the salvation of men. As, on the return of the Ark, the captives and the spoil appeared in the procession, so on the return of Christ in triumph to heaven (Col. ii. 15) He led captive sin and death and hell and all the evil powers. As God had *taken* tribute among men, which He, however, as the victorious monarch of Israel, had given to Israel, so Christ also had taken gifts among men (in His human nature and through His work on earth) which He now, as ascended Lord, gave to men. The Apostle sees that when a King takes, he takes to give, and therefore substitutes the one word for the other, without at all putting the one word as the *translation* of the other. He seizes the idea and represents it in its true fulfilment. Calvin has some excellent

remarks on the principle of interpretation to be followed here.

19. The description of the great triumphal procession is here suddenly broken off with an ascription of praise to God as the Protector and Avenger of His people, and is not again resumed till ver. 24.

BEARETH OUR BURDEN. The majesty of God and the tenderness of God are thus ever associated in Holy Scripture. The same God who came once in awful glory to Sinai, and who now, accompanied by myriads of angels, enters into His sanctuary in Zion, is the God who bears the burden which is too heavy for us (or, perhaps, “who bears *us*,” *i.e.* carries us, as a shepherd when he finds the lost sheep lays it upon his shoulder).

20. MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM DEATH, lit. “for death,” or “with reference to death.” As Calvin observes, “With God are wonderful and various and secret methods, whereby He raises His children from death to life. . . . Even when He has suffered them to be in a manner swallowed up, He certainly furnishes marvellous means of escape,” &c.

21. The reverse of the previous truth: God will take terrible vengeance on His enemies.

THE HAIRY SCALP, personified, *i.e.* the proud, bold, wilful, secure sinner, the thick head of hair being an image of youthful vigour and pride (as in the case of Samson, and Absalom). Similarly in Greek, *κομᾶν*, *to wear long hair*, is used metaphorically, in the signification *to plume oneself, to be proud*, &c. Comp. Is. xxii. 12.

And to Jehovah the Lord belong means of escape from death.

21 But God will smite the head of His enemies,  
The hairy scalp which goeth on still in his trespasses.

22 The Lord hath said: "From Bashan will I bring again,

I will bring them again from the depths of the sea,

23 That thou mayest wash thy foot in blood,  
That the tongue of thy dogs may have its portion from the enemy."

VI. 24 They have seen Thy goings, O God,  
The goings of my God, my King, into the sanctuary:

25 The singers went before, the minstrels followed,  
In the midst of the damsels playing on the timbrels:

26 "In the congregations bless ye God,

22. I WILL BRING AGAIN. No object is supplied, but it is evident from the context that not Israel, as the older commentators generally supposed, but the enemies of Israel are meant. God will bring these back, wherever they may have fled in the hope of safety, and give them up to the vengeance of Israel. From Bashan in *the east*, and from the sea in *the west*, from *the heights* of the mountains, and from *the depths* of the sea (one or both of these antitheses may be designed), they shall be brought back. The passage which really throws light upon this is the similar passage in Amos ix. 1—3: "He that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. Though they dig into Sheōl, thence shall my hand take them; though they climb up into heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from My sight in the bottom of

the sea, thence will I command," &c.

24. The picture of the triumphal procession to the sanctuary is now resumed.

THEY HAVE SEEN, *i.e.* men in general have seen (hence equivalent to a passive, "Thy goings have been seen," as the LXX. ἐθεωρήθησαν). Hupfeld, however, supplies "the nations," *i.e.* the hostile nations, as the subject, and explains the "goings of God" of the various acts already celebrated in the Psalm.

THY GOINGS, here not the march of God against His enemies, as in lxxvii. 13, Hab. iii. 6, but, as is plain from the context, His solemn entry into the sanctuary. Here we have the visible, as before, ver. 17, the invisible part of the spectacle.

25. PLAYING ON THE TIMBRELS, or "beating the tambourine." Comp. Exod. xv. 20, Judges xi. 34.

26. The words of this verse may be a sudden outburst of feeling on the

(Bless) the Lord, (ye that are) of the fountain of Israel."

- 27 There was little Benjamin their ruler,  
The princes of Judah, their company,  
The princes of Zebulun, (and) the princes of Naphtali.

VII. 28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength:  
Strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought for us from Thy temple.

part of the Poet himself (comp. Judg. v. 9), or, perhaps, the words sung by the chorus of maidens.

THE FOUNTAIN OF ISRAEL. The Patriarch, Israel, is the fountain from which the whole nation has issued as a stream. Comp. Is. xlviii. 1, li. 1.

27. Four of the tribes are mentioned by name as taking part in the procession, these four being representatives of the rest, Benjamin and Judah of the Southern kingdom, and Zebulun and Naphtali of the Northern. The last two are especially named with reference to the part which they played in the war against Sisera, and the position they occupy in the song of Deborah (Judges v. 18). The ancient commentators strangely enough see in the mention of these tribes an allusion to, or rather a prophecy of, the birthplace of the Apostles, and in Benjamin of the Apostle Paul, whom Tertullian, in reference to this Psalm, styles *parvus Benjamin*.

LITTLE BENJAMIN. So called, either because their ancestor was the *youngest* son of Jacob, or because it was in reality the smallest tribe, 1 Sam. ix. 21. It is called THEIR RULER, because from that tribe came Israel's first king.

THEIR COMPANY, or *crowd*, Judah being the largest and most numerous of the tribes.

28. The Psalmist now turns in prayer to that God who has ascended into His holy habitation, beseeching Him thence to manifest His power in the subjugation of all enemies; he beholds the nation bringing tribute to Him as to their sovereign; and finally calls upon them to join in loud praise and worship of Him who rules in heaven, and who is the God of Israel.

THY GOD. According to the present text, there is here an abrupt address to Israel. But we should probably read (with many of the ancient Versions), "O God, command Thy strength."

FROM THY TEMPLE (or, perhaps *tabernacle*, see note on Ps. v. 7). This should, probably, be detached from the next verse.

30. In ver. 29 the voluntary submission of foreign powers is described. Here the prayer is that God would compel to submission those who oppose themselves.

REBUKE, as in ix. 5.

THE BEAST OF THE REED, evidently a symbolical description of Egypt. Either the crocodile (called elsewhere *Leviathan*, lxxiv. 14, comp. Job xli. 1, and *Iannin*, lxxiv. 13, Is. li. 9, parall. with Rahab, *i.e.* Egypt) is meant; or the hippopotamus, in Job xl. 15 called *behemoth*, and said there (ver 21) to be "among the lotus, in the covert of the reeds;" (the reeds of the

29 Up to Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto Thee.

30 Rebuke the beast of the reed,

The herd of bulls, with the calves of the peoples,  
Trampling under foot those that have pleasure in silver:

Disperse Thou the peoples that delight in wars.

31 The rich ones shall come out of Egypt;

Cush shall haste to stretch forth her hands unto God.

VIII. 32 O ye kingdoms of the earth, sing unto God,  
Play (on the harp) to the Lord. [Selah.]

33 To Him who rideth through the heaven of heavens which are of old:—

Nile are mentioned also in Is. xix. 6, xxxv. 7.) Probably the former, as the latter does not occur as a symbol of Egypt. Gesen. (on Is. xxvii. 1) supposes the beast of the reed, *i.e.* "the dragon, the crocodile," to be a symbol of Babylon. Lowth (*Prael.*) and Schnurrer think that the lion is meant as a symbol of Syria, lions making their haunts in the thick reeds by the rivers of Mesopotamia, and also by the Jordan, Jer. xlix. 19. Ewald also says, "The lion, or the tiger, *i.e.* the great king." Egypt is selected as an example of the nations of the world, being at this time, no doubt, the leading power.

BULLS, lit. "strong ones." See on xxii. 12. These are the leaders of the nations, kings and captains, whereas the CALVES are explained by the addition of THE PEOPLES, as the nations themselves.

TRAMPLING UNDER FOOT. The participle refers to God, not to the calves. Hence some would change it into the imperative, "Trample under foot." According to the received text, this would stand: "(Rebuke) those that prostrate themselves with pieces (or bars) of silver," or,

"so that they prostrate themselves with pieces of silver." The Psalmist anticipates the entire subjection of all the princes and nations of the earth to the God who has now seated Himself on His throne in Zion.

31. Egypt and Ethiopia are mentioned as examples (as Tyre, xlv. 12, see note there) of the most wealthy and powerful nations, who will bring their treasures and pour out their gifts before God. Comp. Is. xliii. 3, xlv. 14, lx. 5, &c.

SHALL HASTE TO STRETCH FORTH, lit. "shall make to run." The allusion is to stretching out the hands, not in prayer, but in the offering of gifts.

32. The remaining verses of the Psalm are, in fact, prophetic. Standing in the midst of that future glory, which he anticipates so vividly that it seems already to be present, the Psalmist calls upon all the kingdoms of the world to praise God whose glory is in heaven, but who has also chosen Zion, there to dwell, and to manifest His glory, as He manifests it in heaven.

33. THE HEAVEN OF HEAVENS, *i.e.* the highest heavens (comp. Deut.

Lo, he uttereth His voice, a voice of strength.

34 Ascribe ye strength unto God,

Whose majesty is over Israel and whose strength is  
in the clouds.

35 Terrible art Thou, O God, from Thy sanctuaries, Thou  
God of Israel ;

He giveth strength and much power unto the people.  
Blessed be God.

x. 14, 1 Kings viii. 27), said to be "of old" with reference to their creation (comp. cii. 25) ; and on this throning of God in the heavens, whilst at the same time He appears as the Redeemer and Protector of His people upon earth, see Deut. xxxiii. 26.

HIS VOICE. Comp. xlv. 6, and xxix. 3, &c., where the thunder is so called ; God's thunder being the utterance of His power.

35. FROM THY SANCTUARIES. So cx. 2, "Jehovah shall send the rod of

Thy strength, *out of* Zion," as the seat of God's dominion, as the centre *from which* He exercises His power. The plural, as lxxiii. 17, Jer. li. 51, Ezek. xxi. 2 (comp. Ps. lxxxiv. 1, cxxxii. 5, 7), as expressing the *various parts* of the one sanctuary.

HE GIVETH STRENGTH. Comp. xxix. 11, Is. xl. 29.

MUCH POWER. I have so rendered in order to express the *plural* noun : lit. "powers." It occurs nowhere else.

## PSALM LXIX.

WHEN and by whom this Psalm was written, we have no very certain clue to guide us ; unless, indeed, we are disposed to accept the authority of the inscription, which tells us it was written by David. All that is certain from the general tenour of the Psalm is, that it was written under circumstances of great and unmerited suffering by one who was persecuted for righteousness' sake. The zeal which he had shown for the service and honour of God had provoked the hostility of bad men against him, and made him the object of their unholy mockery. In the former part of the Psalm we have the fact of this persecution detailed, in the form of a humble complaint to God, together with an earnest prayer for deliverance. In the latter part there is a marked change of feeling. The sad, humble, subdued, entreating tone in which he had spoken, turns suddenly into a strong outburst of indignant execration. One curse is heaped upon another, till the whole terrible series is completed in the prayer that those who have persecuted and mocked God's afflicted servant may have their names blotted out from His Book of Life.

In some of its features this Psalm bears much resemblance to Psalms xxxv. and cix. In all three Psalms there is the same deep sense of grievous wrong, of innocence unjustly persecuted, and in all alike the same burning indignation is poured in a hot lava-stream of anathemas upon the persecutors. (See note on xxxv. 22.)

In other respects there are points of coincidence between this and the Fortieth Psalm, which seem to justify the conclusion that the two were written by the same person. In each the Sacred Poet describes his affliction as a sinking in the deep mire (xl. 2, lxix. 2) ; in the one we have "They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head," lxix. 4 ; in the other, "Mine iniquities . . . are more than the hairs of my head," xl. 12 ; in both there is the same hope that the triumphant issue of the suffering endured will be a subject of joy to the righteous, and the strengthening of their faith, xl. 3, 16,

lxix. 32. This last passage, again, bears a striking resemblance to xxii. 26, so that Hitzig considers it certain that the Twenty-second Psalm must also be ascribed to the same author. That author he supposes to be Jeremiah. Seiler, and others before him, had thrown out the same suggestion with regard to Psalms xl. and lxix. The grounds on which this view rests are: (1) the character of the suffering, which was occasioned by zeal for God's house, the humility of the sufferer, and the scorn with which he was treated, all of which correspond with what we read Jer. xv. 15—18; (2) the murderous hate of the men of Anathoth towards Jeremiah, xi. 18—23, which may be compared with the complaint of the Psalmist, ver. 8; (3) the close of the Psalm, ver. 34—36, which is, as it were, a summary of what Jeremiah foretold in his Book of Restoration, xxx.—xxxiii.; (4) the peculiar nature of Jeremiah's suffering, who was cast by the princes into the dungeon or cistern of Malchiah, where he sank down in the mire. To this the Prophet is supposed to allude in Lam. iii. 53—58, and, according to Hitzig, this Psalm was his prayer whilst he lay in the cistern or pit (comp. ver. 15).

If any inference can be drawn from style and language, if criticism have any testing power, it would hardly be too much to say that this Psalm could not have been written by David.

This has usually been regarded as a Messianic Psalm. No portion of the Old Testament Scriptures is more frequently quoted in the New, with the exception of Psalm xxii. When Jesus drives the buyers and sellers from the Temple, John ii. 17, His disciples are reminded of the words of ver. 9. When it is said, John xv. 25, that the enemies of Jesus hated Him without a cause, and this is looked upon as a fulfilment of Scripture, the reference is probably to ver. 4 (though it may be also to xxxv. 19). To Him, and the reproach which He endured for the sake of God, St. Paul (Rom. xv. 3) refers the words of this Psalm, ver. 9, "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me." In ver. 12 we have a foreshadowing of the mockery of our Lord by the soldiers in the prætorium, Matt. xxvii. 27—30; in ver. 21, the giving of the vinegar and the gall found their counterpart in the scenes of the Crucifixion, Matt. xxvii. 34. In John xix. 28 there is an allusion, probably, to ver. 21 of this Psalm (and to xxii. 15). The imprecation in ver. 25 is said, in Acts i. 20, to have been fulfilled in the case of Judas Iscariot, though, as the words of the Psalm are plural, the citation is evidently made with some freedom. According to Rom. xi. 9, 10,



the rejection of Israel may be best described in the words of ver. 22, 23.

It will be observed that many of these quotations are made generally, by way of illustration and application, rather than as prophecies which have received fulfilment. Enough, however, remains to justify the Messianic sense of the Psalm, provided our interpretation be fair and sober. The broad principle laid down in the Introduction to the Twenty-second Psalm applies here. The history of Prophets and holy men of old is a typical history. They were, it may be said, representative men, suffering and hoping, not for themselves only, but for the nation whom they represented. In their sufferings, they were feeble and transient images of the Great Sufferer who by His sufferings accomplished man's Redemption: their hopes could never be fully realized but in the issue of His work, nor their aspirations be truly uttered save by His mouth. But confessions of sinfulness and imprecations of vengeance, mingling with these better hopes and aspirations, are a beacon to guide us in our interpretation. They teach us that the Psalm is not a prediction; that the Psalmist does not put himself in the place of the Messiah to come. They show us that here, as indeed in all Scripture, two streams, the human and the Divine, flow on in the same channel. They seemed designed to remind us that if Prophets and Minstrels of old were types of the Great Teacher of the Church, yet that they were so only in some respects, and not altogether. They bear witness to the imperfection of those by whom God spake in time past unto the fathers, in many portions and in many ways, even whilst they point to Him who is the Living Word, the perfect Revelation of the Father.

The Psalm consists of two principal divisions, each of eighteen verses. These, however, again admit of subdivision as follows:—

I. (1) The lamentation, which declares the miserable condition of the Psalmist. Ver. 1—4.

(2) The fuller account of his persecutions, especial prominence being given to the fact that his sufferings are *for the sake of God and of His house*, and the reproach to which he is exposed in consequence Ver. 5—12.

(3) The prayer to God for deliverance, urged both upon the ground of His great misery, and of God's great mercy. Ver. 13—18.

II. (1) He turns back, and again dwells upon the malice and cruelty of his enemies. Ver. 19—21.

(2) And then, roused by the recollection of his wrongs, conscious that he is on the side of God and of truth, and that he has been treated with shameful injustice, he calls for God's worst vengeance upon his enemies. Ver. 22—28.

(3) Lastly, we have the threefold expression of joy: first, as regards God's deliverance of himself, and his own acknowledgement of that mercy (ver. 29—31); then, as regards the encouragement hereby given to all the righteous (ver. 32, 33); and, finally, in prospect that God will save Zion, and build up the cities of Judah (ver. 34—36).

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. "UPON LILIES." (A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

1 SAVE me, O God,

For the waters have come in unto my soul.

2 I have sunk in the mud of the abyss, where there is no standing-place.

I have come into the depths of the waters,  
And a flood hath overwhelmed me.

3 I am weary with my calling, my throat is parched,  
Mine eyes have failed, whilst I wait for my God.

4 More than the hairs of my head are they that hate me  
without cause,

Ver. 1—4. These contain the cry for help, and the description of the Psalmist's miserable condition.

1. THE WATERS, frequently occurring as an image of extreme danger, as in xviii. 4 and 16, xxxii. 6, xlii. 7, and often.

UNTO MY SOUL, expressive of a peril threatening the life, as in Jer. iv. 10. Calvin, however, thinks that *soul* is put for *heart*, and that the expression denotes that the waters had not only covered him, but had forced their way down his throat.

FLOOD. The word FLOOD in these two verses is the well-known Shibboleth which the Ephraimites were unable to pronounce, Judg. xii. 6. It occurs again, Is. xxvii. 12, "flood of the river."

3. IS PARCHED, or "dried up," lit. "is made hot," "burned," as in cii. 3, where it is said of the bones (comp. Job xxx. 30). See xxii. 15.

WHILST I WAIT. It was an example, says Calvin, of a rare and wonderful patience, to wait upon God in so deplorable a condition, and adds, "When he speaks of his throat being parched, this is not as though he had left off praying, but rather intimates, that though his bodily strength failed, the power of his faith did not give way."

4. MORE THAN THE HAIRS. Comp. xl. 12.

WITHOUT CAUSE, as in xxxv. 19, xxxviii. 19. To this passage, probably, allusion is made by our Lord, John xv. 25: ὅτι ἐμίτησάν (LXX.

Strong are they that are my destroyers, mine enemies without reason :—

That which I did not rob, then must I restore.

5 O God, THOU knowest my foolishness,

And my guiltinesses have not been hid from Thee.

6 Let not them that wait on Thee be ashamed through me,

O Lord, Jehovah (of) hosts.

Let not them be confounded, through me, that seek Thee,

O God of Israel.

7 For for Thy sake I have borne reproach,

οἱ μισοῦντες) με δωρεάν, words which He introduces with ἵνα πληρωθῇ ὁ λόγος ὁ γεγραμμένος ἐν τῷ νόμῳ αὐτῶν. The manner of citation plainly shows how we are to understand ἵνα πληρωθῇ; what was true, in some sense, even of the suffering Israelite under the law, was still more true of Him in whom was no sin, and whom, therefore, His enemies did indeed hate without cause.

THAT WHICH I DID NOT ROB, &c. The expression seems to be proverbial. It is equivalent to saying, "I am treated as guilty though I am innocent." Comp. Jer. xv. 10, and the similar complaint in Ps. xxxv. 11.

THEN MUST I RESTORE. The P. B. V. gives the sense very well: "I paid them the things that I never took."

5. Then follows the appeal to God from the unrighteousness of men. The manner in which this appeal is made is, however, unusual. Generally speaking, under such circumstances, we find a strong assertion of the integrity and innocence of the sufferer, and a complaint that he suffers unjustly: here, on the contrary, we find him appealing to God's knowledge of his *foolishness* and his *transgressions*. The passage presents

a great difficulty to Augustine in his attempt to explain the whole Psalm as a prophecy of Christ; and he escapes from the difficulty by saying that the words apply to the members of Christ, and not to the Head. Some would explain this: Thou knowest exactly what the *extent* of my foolishness is, and that I am not so guilty as others would represent me, "Thou knowest *what* my foolishness, &c., is." We have here, as in xl. 12, a confession of sinfulness, a confession that that sinfulness has brought upon him the punishment from which he now suffers. With this confession he turns to God, who knows him far better than he knows himself. "God, *Thou* knowest." He does not attempt to assert that he is innocent, but only that his enemies are unjust and malicious in their attacks. And then he urges his appeal for mercy on the ground that others who trust in God will be put to shame if His servant is left to perish.

7. FOR THY SAKE. Another reason urged why God should rescue him from his enemies. It is true he is a sinner, it is true he suffers for his sin; nevertheless the men who have injured him have injured him unjustly. It is Jehovah himself, and the people of Jehovah (see last verse),

Confusion hath covered my face.

8 I have become estranged from my brethren,  
And an alien to my mother's sons.

9 For zeal for Thine house hath consumed me,  
And the reproaches of them that reproach Thee are  
fallen upon me.

10 And I wept (and) my soul fasted,  
And it became (a subject of) reproaches for me.

who are reproached in him: it is Jehovah's honour, and the honour of His house and worship which are at stake. See note on xlv. 17—22.

The complaint is very similar to the one made in xlv. 13, &c. Compare particularly the expressions, "for Thy sake," "confusion hath covered my face," "I became a proverb," the only difference being that there they are spoken of the nation, here of the individual. An exact parallel is to be found in Jer. xv. 15, "know that for Thy sake I have suffered rebuke."

8. Even his own nearest of kin are estranged from him on this account. Comp. the similar complaints, xxvii. 10, xxxi. 11, xxxviii. 11.

9. ZEAL FOR THINE HOUSE. Perhaps for the state of neglect in which it was, or for the profanation of the sanctuary, though the phrase *may* only mean zeal for God's service and worship. Still, I think, this expression is only to be accounted for on the supposition that the Temple was standing.

HATH CONSUMED, lit. "eaten." Comp. cxix. 139. Similar expressions with respect to the Prophets will be found, Jer. vi. 11, xv. 17, xx. 9, xxiii. 9, Ezek. iii. 14. This, which was true in various imperfect degrees of these servants of God of old, was in a far higher sense true of the Only-begotten Son, who could

say, I seek not mine own glory. Hence, when He purged the Temple, the disciples could not help thinking of these words of the Psalm, as finding their best application in Him. (John ii. 17.)

UPON ME, as upon all God's true prophets (comp. Jer. i. 6—8, Ezek. ii. 6, 7), and above all upon the Great Prophet of the Church, as St. Paul reminds us, quoting these words, Rom. xv. 3.

10. Fasting and sackcloth are as usual the symbols of deep sorrow, and of repentance. Comp. xxxv. 13. But it has been disputed whether they denote, (1) humiliation for his own sin, and outward tokens of his suffering; or (2) sorrow for the despoil done to God's honour and house; or (3) whether the Psalmist appears here in a representative character, sorrowing for the sins of his people, shedding tears for those who had no tears to shed for themselves, fasting for those who were living in pleasure in the earth and were wanton, putting sackcloth on his loins for those who saw not the judgements of God. It is most probable, I think, that a public expression of sorrow is meant, and that this was called forth by the general neglect of religion (ver. 9): and then this public protest against ungodliness was turned into ridicule by those against whom it was directed (ver. 11, 12).

- 11 I made sackcloth also my clothing,  
And I became a proverb unto them ;  
12 They that sit in the gate talk of me,  
And the songs of them that drink strong drink (are  
concerning me).  
13 But as for me—my prayer is unto Thee, O Jehovah !  
In an acceptable time, O God, in the greatness of Thy  
loving-kindness :  
Answer me with the truth of Thy salvation.  
14 Deliver me from the mire, that I sink not ;  
Let me be rescued from my haters, and from the  
depths of the waters.  
15 Let not a flood of waters overwhelm me,  
Neither let the abyss swallow me up,  
And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.  
16 Answer me, O Jehovah, for Thy loving-kindness is  
good ;

12. IN THE GATE, as the place of public resort. See note on ix. 14.

TALK OF ME. The verb is used in poetry, and may mean here either to *converse* generally, or to *sing songs*, as in cv. 2, cxlv. 5.

AND THE SONGS, &c. . . . ARE CONCERNING ME, lit. "And I am (the subject of the) songs, &c." In every boisterous company of drunkards he is the butt of their unholy merriment.

13. BUT AS FOR ME. The pronoun, as usual, emphatic ; in order to mark the contrast between his own conduct and that of such men ; and a nom. absol. as in xxxv. 13, Gen. xvii. 4.

IN AN ACCEPTABLE TIME, lit. "in a time of good pleasure." The same expression occurs in Is. xlix. 8. Comp. Ps. xxxii. 6.

14. This and the next verse answer to verses 1, 2, almost the same expressions being employed, there in

describing the lamentable condition of the Psalmist, here in pleading for deliverance from that condition.

15. THE PIT. The Hebrew word is commonly rendered in the E.V. "well," but here and lv. 23, and Prov. xxiii. 27, rightly, "pit." It means properly, (see App. to Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 512,) "a dug pit, usually with water at the bottom" (except Gen. xiv. 10, where it is used of the natural pits of bitumen). These wells, as is evident from numerous vestiges of them still remaining, had "a broad margin of masonry round the mouth, and often a stone filling up the orifice." This explains the prayer, "Let not the pit *shut her mouth* upon me." Such a person would have been buried alive.

16. GOOD, *i.e.* either *sweet, comforting*, as in lxiii. 3, or *gracious*, *χρηστός*. Comp. cix. 21. This appeal to God's tender mercy, remarks

- According to the greatness of Thy tender mercies,  
turn unto me ;
- 17 And hide not Thy face from Thy servant,  
For I am in distress ; answer me speedily.
- 18 Draw nigh unto my soul, ransom it ;  
Redeem me, because of mine enemies.
- 19 THOU knowest my reproach, and my shame, and my  
confusion ;  
Before Thee are all my adversaries.
- 20 Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of  
heaviness,  
And I waited for sympathy, and there was none ;  
And for comforters, and have not found (them).
- 21 And they gave me gall for my food,

Calvin, "shows how great was the strait of the holy Prophet . . . and of a truth it is a very difficult matter to be sure that God is gracious while He is angry, and near while He is far off.

19. The second principal division of the Psalm opens with a renewed appeal to God. Comp. ver. 5 and ver. 13. There is a repetition of what had been said already, ver. 4, 7, 9, &c., together with the additional aggravation mentioned in ver. 21.

THOU KNOWEST. In the certainty that all his sorrows, fears, sicknesses, reproach, sufferings, are known to God, the Psalmist again finds his consolation.

20. FULL OF HEAVINESS, or "sick," or "faint." Perhaps here used in reference to the mind rather than the body.

SYMPATHY. This is the only place in the Psalter where the word is found. Properly speaking, it is not a noun, but a verb in the infin. Hence the periphrasis in the E. V. "I looked for some to take pity," or, as in the marg., "to lament with." The

word *sympathy* has nowhere been employed by our translators, but it exactly conveys the force of the Hebrew word, inasmuch as it is used of sympathy in joy as well as in sorrow ; see Job xlii. 11, where our version renders "and they bemoaned him : " "and they sympathised with him " would have been better. They would not *bemoan* him on his restoration to health and prosperity. This word also is used several times by Jeremiah, xv. 5, xvi. 5, xlviii. 17.

21. GALL. What is the exact meaning of the word it is difficult to say. According to Hosea x. 4, it is a plant "growing in the furrows of the field," and there the E. V. renders it by "hemlock." In Deut. xxix. 18, Lam. iii. 19, it is joined with "wormwood." Gesen. referring to Deut. xxxii. 32, supposes some berry-bearing plant to be meant, and conjectures that it may be "the poppy." And this Mr. Houghton (Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, App. GALL) thinks most probable, where all is uncertain. Hengstenberg suggests it may mean only "some-

And when I was thirsty they gave me vinegar to drink.  
 22 Let their table before them become a snare,

thing very bitter," and not of necessity any particular root or plant.

WHEN I WAS THIRSTY, lit. "for my thirst."

VINEGAR or "sour wine;" the Greek translators, *ὄξος*, and the Latin, *acetum*. St. Matthew, who never forgets the foreshadowings of the O. T., alludes, there can be no doubt, to this verse of the Psalm, when he mentions, in his narrative of the Crucifixion (xxvii. 34), that the Roman soldiers offered our Lord "vinegar mingled with gall" (*ὄξος, [οἶνον] μετὰ χολῆς μεμιγμένον*), just before He was nailed to the cross. St. Mark, on the other hand, in his narrative (xv. 23) speaks of "wine mingled with myrrh" (*οἶνος ἐσμυρνισμένος*). Dean Alford, in his note on the former passage, seems to think that the two potions could not be the same, though he admits that *οἶνος* might mean the same as *ὄξος*, *sour wine*. But Mr. Houghton has observed (in the article before referred to) that "the wine mingled with myrrh" "was probably a mere ordinary beverage of the Romans, who were in the habit of seasoning their various wines, which, as they contained little alcohol, soon turned sour, with various spices, drugs, &c.;" and if so, then the *same* potion may be described by St. Matthew, and the words "with gall" may either denote generally the bitter nature of the draught, or some bitter substance may have been purposely added by way of mockery. It has been usually assumed that this drink was given to criminals to stupefy, and deaden pain; but it does not seem that myrrh has any of the properties of an anodyne.

If, however, St. Matthew and St.

Mark admit of such reconciliation (though were no reconciliation possible it need not startle us), the allusion to this Psalm in St. John presents another difficulty. This Evangelist (xix. 28) tells us that Jesus, in order that the Scripture might be accomplished, said, "I thirst." But this was not before our Lord was crucified, but at the last, only just before He gave up the ghost. It is clear, therefore, that he and St. Matthew, though both acknowledging the fulfilment of the Psalm in our Lord's crucifixion, associate that fulfilment with two different circumstances. But we are not, therefore, compelled to conclude, as Hupfeld does, that there is no fulfilment at all. The Psalm is truly typical, and *its whole meaning* is exhausted not in the one circumstance only, but in both.

22. The imprecations which follow can only be perplexing to those who, having adopted a hard mechanical theory of prophecy, feel themselves compelled to understand every part of the Psalm as equally predictive of our Lord; or to those who persistently refuse to acknowledge the difference between the Old Testament and the New. If we go on the broad ground of a typical foreshadowing of Christ in the person of some saint of old, then we shall not be obliged to assume that *all* his words are words such as our Lord could use. And if we remember what our Lord himself has taught us, that the spirit of Elijah—the greatest of the O. T. Prophets—is very different from the spirit of Christ, then we shall not be offended at language in the mouth of a saint under the old dispensation which we

- And when they are in peace (let it be) a trap.  
 23 Let their eyes be darkened that they see not,  
 And make their loins constantly to shake.  
 24 Pour out upon them Thine indignation,  
 And let the fierceness of Thine anger overtake them.  
 25 Let their encampment be desolate,  
 In their tents let there be none to dwell.  
 26 For him whom THOU hast smitten have they persecuted,

do not find sanctioned under the new. See more on this subject in the note on xxxv. 22.

THEIR TABLE, said with reference to ver. 21. They had given him gall and vinegar for his food: let their food, their table, with all its sumptuousness and all its luxury, become a snare to take them. It has been spread for their enjoyment; let it turn to their destruction. Comp. xxiii. 5. Or perhaps the meaning may be; Let them be like persons who while sitting at their meals "in peace," in security, unarmed, and unsuspecting, are suddenly surprised by their enemies. Their "table becomes a snare," as exposing them to certain destruction.

WHEN THEY ARE IN PEACE, lit. "to (them) in peace, or in security." It denotes that kind of security which is the very gate of destruction. Comp. 1 Thess. v. 3. The Apostle, citing this passage in Rom. xi. 9 (*εἰς παγίδα, καὶ εἰς θήραν, καὶ εἰς σκάνδαλον, καὶ εἰς ἀνταπόδομα αὐτοῖς*), follows neither the Hebrew nor the LXX., but either quotes from memory or gives a free rendering of his own. His application of the words is also remarkable, for he quotes them in illustration of his position that a judicial blindness has fallen upon the nation of Israel at large, from which only "the elect" had been exempted. To discuss the principle of this illustration, would be

to discuss the whole question of citations in the New Testament from the Old—a subject much too large to be satisfactorily investigated in a note.

23. The darkening of the eyes denotes weakness and perplexity, as the enlightening of the eyes (see on xix. 8) denotes renewed vigour and strength. Similarly, the shaking of the loins is expressive of terror and dismay and feebleness. (Nah. ii. 10, Dan. v. 6.) Or the first may mean the depriving of reason and understanding; the second, the taking away of all strength for action.

25. THEIR ENCAMPMENT. Prop. "the moveable village of nomadic tribes," who usually pitch their tents in a circle. The expression is of course used here figuratively, in accordance with "tents" in the parallelism.

26. The reason for the imprecation is given, because of the unpitiful cruelty which delighted in adding to the pain and affliction of one whom God had already brought low. His very suffering might have moved them to compassion. Comp. Job xix. 21, 22. The plural in the second clause of the verse, THY WOUNDED ONES (comp. Is. lxvi. 16, Jer. xxv. 33), passes from the individual instance to the general conduct of these men, but implies at the same time that there are some few others exposed to the like treatment with himself.



- And of the pain of Thy wounded ones do they tell.  
 27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity,  
 And let them not come into Thy righteousness.  
 28 Let them be blotted out from the book of life,  
 And with the righteous let them not be written.  
 29 But as for me—I am afflicted and in pain :  
 Thy salvation, O God, shall set me up on high.  
 30 I will praise the Name of God with a song,  
 And magnify it with thanksgiving.

DO THEY TELL, as if they *counted* one by one every blow that fell upon him, every cry that he had uttered, only to turn it into mockery (comp. lix. 12, lxiv. 5).

27. ADD INIQUITY, &c. *i.e.* let it all stand against them in Thy Book ; one sin after another, as committed, not being blotted out, but only swelling the fearful reckoning. Comp. Jer. xviii. 23. This swelling of the catalogue of guilt is in fact swelling the punishment.

COME INTO, *i.e.* "be partakers of" (as Ezek. xvi. 7).

THY RIGHTEOUSNESS, that righteousness which God gives and which alone is accepted in His sight.

28. BOOK OF LIFE, or "of the living" (as the LXX., Luth., Calv., the E. V.), called in Exod. xxxii. 32 "the book of God." Comp. Is. iv. 3 ; Dan. xii. 1. See also Luke x. 20 ; Phil. iv. 3 ; Rev. iii. 5, xiii. 8. The figure is borrowed from the civil lists or register in which the names of citizens were enrolled (Jer. xxii. 30, Ezek. xiii. 9). To be blotted out of this denotes exclusion from all the blessings and privileges of the theocracy, and therefore from all hope of salvation, as is evident from the next clause : "let them not be written with the *righteous* ;" the righteous being the true Israelites, as in Habak. ii. 4. This is the most terrible imprec-

cation of all, though but the necessary consequence of that obstinate impenitence before supposed. Calvin, who supposes God's eternal counsel of salvation to be meant by *the book of life*, is obliged to explain away the obvious meaning of the words, and argues that, inasmuch as God's purpose cannot be changed, the expression is merely adapted to human notions. They, he says, who have once been written in that book cannot be really blotted out ; but because God's counsel is secret to us, those may be said to be "blotted out of His book" whom he *openly* excludes from His Church. It is this open rejection therefore which is here meant, and the expression is equivalent to saying : "Do not reckon them in the number of Thy people, neither let them be gathered with Thy Church." To such straits is the ablest of commentators driven, when he has resigned himself to the fetters of an inexorable logic.

29. The Psalm closes with joyful hopes and vows of thanksgiving for God's mercy, in this respect resembling Psalm xxii. In this joy and thanksgiving all other righteous sufferers shall share. And finally Zion and the cities of Judah shall be rebuilt, amid the universal jubilee of all creation.

BUT AS FOR ME, placing himself

- 31 And it shall please Jehovah better than an ox,  
A bullock with horns and hoofs.  
32 The afflicted have seen it and rejoice :  
Ye that seek God,—let your heart live.  
33 For Jehovah hearkeneth to the poor,  
And His prisoners He hath not despised.  
34 Let heaven and earth praise Him,  
The seas and all that swarmeth therein.  
35 For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah,  
And (men) shall dwell there, and possess it.  
36 And the seed of His servants shall inherit it,  
And they that love His Name shall abide therein.

emphatically in contrast to those who had been the object of his imprecation.

31. WITH HORNS AND HOOFS, lit. "showing horns, showing hoofs." The first is mentioned in order to mark that the animal was not under three years old, and therefore of the proper age according to the Law; the last as intimating that it belonged to the class of clean four-footed animals, parting the hoof, Lev. xi.; and the meaning is, that the most perfect and valuable of the sacrifices ordained by the Law was not to be compared to the sacrifice of a grateful heart. See notes on l., li.

32. LET YOUR HEART LIVE. Comp. the same expression xxii. 26.

33. This joyful certainty of his own deliverance, this joyful hope that others afflicted like himself will rejoice together with him, rests upon the known character of God, upon

the universal experience of His goodness.

HIS PRISONERS, *i.e.* those of His people who have been led into captivity in Babylon.

34. In remembrance of this he calls upon the universe to praise God.

35. The conclusion of the Psalm is not unlike Is. lxxv. 9. If the Psalm was written, as seems not improbable, by Jeremiah, there is no reason why these verses may not have formed part of the original text. Indeed, there is but little pretence for regarding them as a later liturgical addition, made at the time of the Exile. They are not so easily separable from the context as the close of Ps. xiv. for instance, or that of li. Yet for those who maintain that David was the author this is the only tenable ground. Such words could have no meaning in David's mouth.

PSALM LXX.

THIS Psalm is a repetition, with some variations, of the last five verses of Psalm xl. I see no reason to abandon the opinion which I have expressed in the introduction to Psalm xl, that this Psalm formed originally a part of that Psalm and was subsequently detached and altered for a special occasion.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. (A PSALM) OF DAVID. TO BRING TO REMEMBRANCE.]\*

- 1 O GOD, (make haste) to deliver me ;  
O Jehovah, to help me make haste.
- 2 Let them be ashamed and put to the blush  
That seek after my soul ;  
Let them be turned backward and put to confusion  
That wish me evil.
- 3 Let them be turned back as a reward of their shame  
Who say, Aha ! Aha !

1. O GOD, instead of O JEHOVAH, xl. 13, and the verb BE PLEASED, omitted here, which is expressed there.

TO HELP ME, lit. "to my help."

2. PUT TO THE BLUSH : in xl. 14, there is added TOGETHER, and at the end of the next member of the verse TO DESTROY IT.

PUT TO CONFUSION. The word

should have been so rendered in xl. 14.

THAT WISH ME EVIL, lit. "that delight in my evil, *i.e.* my misfortune."

3. LET THEM BE TURNED. In xl. 15, we have the far stronger expression, LET THEM BE STRUCK DUMB, *i.e.* with amazement.

AS A REWARD OF THEIR SHAME,

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\* The same title occurs Ps. xxxviii. "To bring to remembrance," *i.e.* either as a memorial of suffering and deliverance, or "to bring me into remembrance *with God*."

- 4 Let all those that seek Thee be glad and rejoice in  
Thee,  
And let them that love Thy salvation say always,  
"God be magnified."  
5 And as for me, afflicted and poor,  
O God, make haste unto me !  
My Help and my Deliverer art Thou ;  
O Jehovah, make no long tarrying ! \*

lit. "upon the heel of their shame," and hence "as a consequence, retribution," &c., and as a prep. simply "on account of."

4. GOD (*Elohim*); in xl. 16, Jehovah.

5. O GOD, MAKE HASTE UNTO ME. For this, we have in xl. 17, "the Lord thinketh upon me" (*Adonai* instead of *Elohim*); and afterwards "O my God," instead of "O Jehovah."

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## PSALM LXXI.

THIS Psalm is without any Inscription in the Hebrew. In the LXX. its title is "(A Psalm) of David, of the sons of Jonadab, and of those who were first led captive," a curiously composite title, which contains a contradiction in itself. It may, however, have been intended to denote that, in the opinion of the translators, the Psalm was Davidic in origin, and, at the same time, to record the tradition

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\* "On the 26th of September, 1660, St. Vincent de Paul being now near his end, desired the Holy Communion, and passed the night in almost unceasing prayer. He requested that the 70th Psalm might be read to him several times, and repeated as often as his strength would allow the words 'Haste thee to help me—make no long tarrying, O my God.' On the 27th a priest who was very dear to him came to his bedside to ask his blessing. The dying man began to speak in the words of the Apostle, 'I am persuaded that He who has begun a good work in you will——' Here his uplifted hand sank down, and he fell asleep as gently as the sun sinks to rest on a summer eve."—*Stories of Success*. (S.P.C.K.)

that it was a favourite Psalm with the Rechabites and the earlier exiles.

On two points, only, do we gather any certain information from the Psalm itself. First, it is evident that it was written by one already past the meridian of life, and verging upon old age. And, secondly, it borrows so largely from other Psalms, the 22d, 31st, 35th, and 40th, some of them, probably, Psalms written long after the time of David, that it must be regarded as one of the later specimens of Hebrew poetry.

Other evidence of an internal kind renders it not improbable that the Psalm was written by Jeremiah. It would apply obviously to his circumstances. His life had been a life of extraordinary perils and extraordinary deliverances. He had been consecrated from his birth, and even before his birth, to his office, (Jer. i. 5, compared with ver. 6 of the Psalm). He had discharged that office for more than thirty years, and might, therefore, be verging on old age in the reign of Zedekiah. The prominent position which he occupied for so long a period before princes and people harmonizes well with the language of the Psalm in verses 7 and 21. Finally, the style and general character of the poetry are not unlike those of Jeremiah. There is the same plaintive elegiac strain which we find in his writings, and the same disposition to borrow from earlier poets.

All this falls in very well with the tradition which has been preserved by the LXX. A Psalm written by Jeremiah would very naturally have a peculiar value in the eyes of the Rechabites whom the Prophet mentions so honourably, and in the eyes of the first exiles who had so often listened to the words of his lips.

The Psalm can hardly be said to have any regular strophical form.

It has first an Introduction. Ver. 1—3.

Then follow two main divisions. The first of these tells the story of *the past*, recounts God's goodness and the Psalmist's trust, and concludes with a prayer for the overthrow of his enemies. Ver. 4—13.

The next looks forward to *the future*, anticipates deliverance, promises thanksgiving, and sees the prayer for the overthrow of his enemies answered. Ver. 14—24.

Verses 13 and 24 correspond to one another almost in the manner of a refrain.

- 1 IN Thee, O Jehovah, have I found refuge,  
 Let me not be ashamed for ever.
- 2 In Thy righteousness deliver me and rescue me ;  
 Incline thine ear unto me, and save me.
- 3 Be Thou to me a rock of habitation to which I may  
 always resort ;  
 Thou hast given commandment to save me ;  
 For Thou art my rock and my fortress.
- I. 4 O my God, rescue me from the hand of the wicked,  
 From the grasp of the evil-doer and the violent.
- 5 For THOU, O Lord, Jehovah ! art my hope,  
 Thou art my trust from my youth up.
- 6 Upon Thee have I been holden up from the womb,  
 From my mother's bowels Thou art my benefactor,

1—3. The opening of the Psalm is borrowed, with slight verbal alterations, from the opening of xxxi.

3. TO WHICH I MAY ALWAYS RESORT, *i.e.* where I may always find safety when danger threatens.

THOU HAST GIVEN COMMANDMENT. It is not necessary to suppose that the command is given to the Angels ; for, as Calvin long ago observed, God has innumerable means of imparting help and protection, and He may be said to command deliverance when He shows it in some open and signal manner. Comp. xlv. 4, lxviii. 28.

5. MY HOPE. Comp. Jer. xvii. 13, l. 7, where God is called "the Hope of Israel." So in the New Test. Christ is called "our Hope," 1 Tim. i. 1 ; "the Hope of glory," Col. i. 27.

6. HAVE I BEEN HOLDEN UP (in the passage which has here been imitated, xxii. 10, "I have been cast"), an expression wonderfully descriptive of what faith is, and of what God is to those who trust in

Him. He is a father who bears them in His arms and carries them in His bosom ; they are as children who lean all their weight upon Him, and find their sweetest rest in His supporting hand. This is the very idea of faith, according to its Hebrew signification. When it is said in Gen. xv. 6, that "Abraham believed God," it means literally "*he leaned upon God*" (though the root there is different, it is the same which means *to bear or carry a child*, Numb. xi. 12, and in Is. xlix. 23 is used of a *nursing father*). But the Psalmist speaks here, not mainly of his own trust in God, but rather of his experience of God's loving care and protection.

MY BENEFACTOR. In the mouth of Jeremiah, if, as we have conjectured, the Psalm was written by him, such words have a peculiar interest, for they refer, no doubt, to that word of Jehovah which came unto him, saying, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee ; and before thou

- Of Thee is my praise alway.  
 7 I have become as a wonder unto many,  
 But thou art my strong refuge.  
 8 My mouth shall be filled with Thy praise,  
 (And) with Thine honour all the day long.  
 9 Cast me not away in the time of old age,  
 When my strength faileth forsake me not.  
 10 For mine enemies have said of me—  
 And they that watch for my soul have taken counsel  
 together,  
 11 Saying :—God hath forsaken him,  
 Pursue and seize him, for there is none to deliver.  
 12 O God, be not far from me ;  
 O my God, haste Thee to help me !  
 13 Let them be ashamed, let them be consumed,

camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee." (Jer. i. 5.)

OF THEE, lit. "*in* Thee," God being the great object of his praise, and the construction being the same as that with the verb in xliv. 8.

7. A WONDER. Commentators are divided in their interpretation of the word. Some understand it in a good sense, "a marvel of God's protecting care and love, which had been vouchsafed to him even in the extremest perils." Others suppose him to mean, that because of the greatness of the sufferings and calamities which had befallen him, he had been, as it were, a portent, a prodigy. But perhaps it is better to understand it as applying to his whole wonderful life of trials and blessings, of perils and deliverances, such as did not ordinarily fall to the lot of man. It is implied, at the same time, that his life was a public life, such as that of a Prophet, or leading man amongst his people, or it would not have at-

tracted the notice and excited the wonder of "many."

8. FILLED. It is, I think, best to take the verb here as a present, describing the immediate and natural consequence of all that care and love which in the previous verses he had celebrated.

9. This review of the past leads him to look forward to the future, and especially to the season of old age, which already, it would seem, was creeping upon him.

10. HAVE SAID OF ME. The preposition may be so rendered : "with respect to me ;" or simply "*to* me ;" as, "*to* my soul," iii. 2, where see note. *What* they say is given in ver. 11, the intervening words being parenthetical.

HAVE TAKEN COUNSEL TOGETHER, as lxxxiii. 3, 5. Comp. ii. 2.

12. This and the next verse are composed of phrases borrowed from other Psalms, xvii. 11, 19, xxxviii. 21, 22, xl. 13.

That withstand my soul ;  
 Let them be covered with reproach and confusion  
 That seek to do me evil.

- II. 14 But as for me—I will alway hope,  
     And will praise Thee more and more.  
 15 My mouth shall tell of Thy righteousness  
     (And) of Thy salvation all the day ;  
     For I know no numbers (thereof).  
 16 I will come with the mighty deeds of the Lord  
     Jehovah ;  
     I will make mention of Thy righteousness, (even)  
     of Thine only.  
 17 O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth ;  
     And hitherto do I declare Thy wondrous works.  
 18 Yea also to old age and grey hairs, O God, forsake  
     me not,  
     Till I declare Thine arm to (the next) generation,  
     Thy might unto all that are to come,

14. AND WILL YET PRAISE, &c., lit. "And will add to all Thy praise ;" but I have preferred adopting the more idiomatic rendering of the E.V.

15. RIGHTEOUSNESS. The Hebrew word has, most unfortunately, been rendered here and in the next verse, by French and Skinner, "mercy," to the grievous marring of the whole passage. It never means anything but *righteousness*, least of all when spoken of God. God's salvation stands to his righteousness in the relation of effect to cause. God has pledged Himself to save those who put their trust in Him, and as a righteous God He cannot deny Himself. This seems to be the connection between the two words in this Psalm. In Isaiah, *righteousness* is re-

garded, not merely as an attribute of God, but as imparted to man (almost in the sense of justification), and so, in fact, constituting his true salvation.

NO NUMBERS (the Hebrew word occurs only here). God's righteousness and God's salvation are infinitely beyond all man's power to calculate or to repeat. Comp. xl. 5, cxxxix. 18.

16. I WILL COME WITH, &c. *i.e.* "I will come (into the Temple, probably, comp. lxvi. 13) with all the great and mighty deeds which God has done on my behalf as my subject of grateful praise." That this is the meaning is plain from the parallelism in the next clause.

OF THINE ONLY, lit. "of Thee alone."



- 19 And Thy righteousness, O God, which is very high,  
 Thou who hast done great things :  
 O God, who is like unto Thee !
- 20 (Thou) who hast showed us distresses many and  
 sore,  
 Thou wilt quicken us again,  
 And from the depths of the earth Thou wilt lift us  
 up again.
- 21 Do Thou increase my greatness,  
 And turn (Thyself and) comfort me.
- 22 Also *I* will give thanks unto Thee with a lute, (even)  
 Thy truth, O my God ;  
 I will play to Thee upon a harp, O Thou Holy One  
 of Israel.
- 23 My lips shall shout for joy, for I will play unto Thee,  
 And my soul which Thou hast redeemed ;

18. THINE ARM. Comp. Is. lii.  
 io, liii. 1 ; Ezek. iv. 7.

TO THE NEXT GENERATION, lit.  
 "to a generation," but here used ab-  
 solutely for the following generation,  
 as in xxii. 30.

19. AND THY RIGHTEOUSNESS.  
 The construction is continued from  
 ver. 18. Delitzsch, indeed, carries  
 it still further, and makes verses 19,  
 20, 21, all depend on the verb "I de-  
 clare" in verse 18 : "Till I declare  
 . . . Thy might and Thy righteous-  
 ness, &c. . . . *that* Thou hast done  
 great things, &c. *That* Thou hast  
 showed, &c."

20. THOU HAST SHOWED, see  
 lx. 3.

THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH. A  
 figurative expression, like "the gates  
 of death," denoting the extremest  
 peril. Comp. lxix. 2, 14. The  
 word "depths" is the same word as  
 in xxxiii. 7, "He layeth up the depths  
 in storehouses" (it is the plur. of the  
 word which occurs in Gen. i. 2), and

means the vast collection of waters in  
 the seas. God is said to bring back  
 His people to life, who had been, as  
 it were, drowned in the depths of the  
 waters.

21. DO THOU INCREASE, or,  
 "mayest Thou increase."

MY GREATNESS. An unusual ex-  
 pression. The word is used of the  
 majesty of God, cxlv. 3, 6 ; of kings,  
 Esther i. 4 ; and of princes, vi. 3,  
 x. 2 ; and its use here, therefore,  
 would seem to imply that the Poet  
 was a person of considerable position  
 and influence.

22. WITH A LUTE, lit. "with an  
 instrument of a lute, or *nabla*."

HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL. This name  
 of God occurs in the Psalms only in  
 two other places, lxxviii. 41, lxxxix.  
 18, these last two being, according  
 to Delitzsch, older Psalms than this.  
 In Isaiah this Name of God occurs  
 thirty times, in Habakkuk once, in  
 Jeremiah (who may have adopted it  
 from Isaiah) twice, l. 29, li. 5.

24 Also my tongue shall talk of Thy righteousness all the  
day,  
For they are ashamed, for they are brought to  
confusion, that seek my hurt.

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## PSALM LXXII.

Two Psalms only in the entire compass of the Psalter, this and the 127th, bear the name of Solomon. Apart from the question whether these particular Psalms are rightly attributed to him or not, the fact is worthy of notice, as it shows us that tradition, which has shed so many glories round the name of Solomon, did not suppose him to have inherited his father's taste for religious poetry and music, or it would not have failed to add this to his many other accomplishments.

Calvin, indeed, and others have conjectured that the inscription even here does not denote that Solomon was the author. They appeal to ver. 20, which tells us that this was the last prayer of David, and they urge that accordingly the title must signify "*For* Solomon," not "*of* Solomon." Calvin observes: "After carefully weighing all, I incline to the view that David uttered this prayer as he was dying, and that it was put into the form of a Psalm by his son, that the memory thereof might never perish. . . . But as Solomon took the argument from his father, and only clothed it in the garb of poetry, we may regard David as the principal author."

But ver. 20, taken to the letter, would rather imply that all the Psalms in this Book were written by David, whereas the inscriptions themselves contradict this, not to mention that the verse itself is a manifestly later addition. And in all other instances where the name of an author is prefixed to a Psalm, it is prefixed with the same preposition which is here employed. The inscription, beyond all doubt, means to say that the Psalm is Solomon's. Nor do I see any reason for rejecting the tradition thus conveyed to us.

There have been many different conjectures as to the time when this Psalm was written, but all the soundest expositors admit that the hopes and aspirations here expressed—so grand and so far-reaching, that they are little less than prophecies—find their fulfilment in One greater than Solomon. “These promises were realized in Solomon, but only typically. They expect, therefore, after Solomon their final realization, and that, in that Son of David whom the Prophets of the later kingdom foretell.”

Solomon, then, may have uttered such a prayer, may have uttered it for himself, and yet may have felt how far he was, how far any human monarch must be, from approaching to the great ideal which rose, in all its majesty, before his mind. Whether he uttered it at the beginning of his reign, is more doubtful. The allusions to Sheba and Tarshish would seem to imply a somewhat later date. But be this as it may, we have here another instance of the way in which prophecy rooted itself in the Jewish soil, how it looked first to the Present and then to the Future, first to the Type and then to the Antitype. Calvin observes most justly, and the observation bears upon the interpretation of all the Messianic Psalms: “They who will have this to be simply a prediction of the kingdom of Christ seem to twist the words very violently. And besides, we should always take care not to give the Jews good reason for reproaching us, as if we were determined by mere force of sophistry to apply to Christ what does not directly refer to Him.”

The Targum, however, paraphrases the first verse of the Psalm thus: “O God, give the knowledge of Thy judgements to the King Messiah, and Thy justice to the Son of King David.”

And the Midrash Tehillim says of the king here mentioned: “This is the King Messiah, for it is said, And a stem shall go forth from the root of Jesse.” Saadiah, on Daniel vii. 13, takes the same view.

The Psalm is, like the second, the twentieth, twenty-first, and forty-fifth, a Royal Psalm.

It has no regular strophical division, but consists of the following parts:—

I. The prayer that the reign of the king may be a reign of righteousness, peace, and prosperity, and that it may endure for ever. Ver. 1—7.

II. That his dominion may know no bounds, save those of the world itself. Ver. 8—11.

III. Then follows the reason why such a dominion should be granted him. He is worthy to receive riches, and honour, and glory, and might, for he is the righteous saviour of the poor and the afflicted. Ver. 12—15.

IV. Lastly, the prayer is repeated both for prosperity and for an everlasting and a universal dominion. Ver. 16, 17.

[(A PSALM) OF SOLOMON.]

I O GOD, give Thy judgements unto the king,  
And Thy righteousness unto the king's son.

I. The prayer is that God would give His righteousness to the king, that so he may rule and judge righteously and his righteous government produce righteousness, and therefore peace, among the people.

The difference between the JUDGEMENTS of God in the first clause, and the RIGHTEOUSNESS of God in the second, is this : the former refers to *the several decisions* which the king may be called upon to pronounce, and the prayer is that these may be so in accordance with the will of God that they may be as if uttered by His mouth ; the second refers to the inner mind and spirit, the wisdom and the discernment, which should be the reflex of the Divine mind.

This is the very idea of justice, when the decisions of the earthly judge are in perfect accordance with those of the heavenly : but this can only be when there rests upon the former "the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge,

and of the fear of the Lord." To One only was this Spirit given without measure. In One only was this idea realized. Solomon, it is true, prayed (1 Kings iii. 9) that God would give him an understanding, or rather *obedient* heart, that he might judge his people ; and of him we read (1 Kings iii. 28), "And all Israel heard of the judgement which the king had judged, and they feared before the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was with him to do judgement ;" and to him the Queen of Sheba said (1 Kings x. 9), "Because Jehovah loved Israel for ever, therefore made He thee king to do judgement and righteousness." But Solomon did not fulfil the hope of this prayer. The righteous judge became the oppressor of his people ; the wise king the weak, foolish, despicable voluptuary : God brake in pieces before the eyes of His people the frail earthly type, that He might lead them to wait for Him who was "higher than the kings of the earth," and who would "not judge after the

- 2 Then shall he decide the cause of Thy people with  
righteousness,  
And of Thine afflicted with judgement.  
3 May the mountains bring forth peace to the people,  
And the hills in righteousness!  
4 May he judge the afflicted of the people,  
Save the sons of the poor,  
And crush the oppressor!  
5 So that they fear Thee while the sun endureth,

sight of His eyes, neither decide after the hearing of His ears, but would judge with righteousness the weak, and decide with uprightness for the afflicted of the earth."

The Talmudic saying is very striking, and worth quoting here: "Every judge who judgeth a judgement of truth truly, maketh the Divine Glory (the Shechinah) to dwell in Israel."  
—*Sanh.* fol. 7, 1.

THE KING'S SON. The stress laid upon this is in accordance with Oriental usage. That the king was of royal ancestry was mentioned on coins, public monuments, and the like. See *Is.* xix. 11.

3. The mountains and hills are mentioned as being the great characteristic features of a country like Palestine. *Comp.* *Joel* iii. 18: "The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk." See *Smith's Dict. of the Bible*, art. "Palestine," § 26.

PEACE. This is ever represented in Scripture as the fruit of righteousness, and as the great blessing of the times of the Messiah. The king of righteousness is also king of peace. *Comp.* *Is.* ii. 4, ix. 5, 6, xi. 9, lxxv. 25; *Micah* iv. 3; *Zech.* ix. 10.

IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. For the third time this is mentioned as that attribute which, beyond all others, stamps the king and his rule over his people.

4. SONS OF THE POOR, *i.e.* merely "poor persons," in accordance with the usual Hebrew idiom.

5. SO THAT THEY FEAR THEE. It is doubtful whether the address is to *God*, or to *the king*. The change from the third person to the second, and *vice versa*, is so common in Hebrew (see on xxii. 26), that the person addressed, so far as the construction is concerned, may certainly be the king. Nor is the extended duration of his reign implied in the words "as long as the sun," &c., against this view, even if we suppose the words to be addressed originally to a human monarch. For the Jewish monarch was ruler in a theocratic kingdom, which by its very nature was destined to endure for ever. *Comp.* *ver.* 7, 17, and lxxxix. 4, 28, &c., 36, &c.; and if in those passages the throne and the race of the monarch are the object of hope, whereas here the hopes of the Psalmist centre in his *person*, still this also finds its parallel in xxi. 4, "He asked life of Thee: Thou gavest (it) him, Length of days for ever and ever" (see note there). Still I think, considering that the Psalm opens with a prayer addressed to God, it is better to suppose that God is also addressed here; and then the clause will be conjunctive, and mark the consequence of the king's righteous rule.

And as long as the moon unto all generations

6 Let him be as rain coming down upon the mown grass,  
As showers that water the earth.

7 Let the righteous flourish in his days,  
And abundance of peace, till there be no more moon.

THE SUN and the MOON are mentioned here, and again ver. 7, and in lxxxix. 37, as witnesses to an everlasting order, and as it were figures of eternity, things fixed and unchangeable compared with the fleeting, dying generations of men, as Jer. xxxi. 35, xxxiii. 20; though, as compared with God, themselves subject to decay and destruction, cii. 26, &c., Is. li. 6, comp. Job xiv. 18.

AS LONG AS THE SUN, lit. "*with* the sun." Comp. Dan. iv. 3, "*with* generation and generation."

BEFORE THE MOON, or, "in the presence of the moon," *i.e.* as long as the moon shines, "so long as she turns her face to the earth." In Job viii. 16 the use of the preposition is similar: "He is green *before* the sun," though the phrase means there not "as long as the sun shines," but rather "in the sunshine," "under the influence of the warmth and light of the sun."

6. LET HIM BE, &c., lit. "let him come down as rain," the verb which belongs strictly to the figure being applied improperly to the subject.

The gracious influence of the monarch, and of his righteous sway, is strikingly compared to the bountiful shower which freshens the withered herbage, and changes the brown, bare, parched, dusty surface, as by a touch of magic, into one mass of verdure and bloom. We have the same figure in Deut. xxxii. 2, Job xxix. 22, 23, and Prov. xvi. 15. But the most striking parallel is in the last words of David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 4, where it is said of one who ruleth

righteously and in the fear of God among men, that he is

Like the light of the morning when  
the sun ariseth,

A morning without clouds ;—  
From the sunshine, from the rain,  
the green grass (sprouts) from  
the earth.

THE MOWN GRASS, lit. "that which is shorn," whether *fleece* or *meadow*. In the former sense it occurs Judg. vi. 37, and so the older translators all take it, probably with the idea that the reign of the monarch would be accompanied by signal tokens of the Divine favour and blessing, like the dew upon Gideon's fleece: in the latter sense, the word is found Amos vii. 1 (where the E. V. has "mowings"); and this is indisputably its meaning here, as the parallelism shows. The *mown* meadow is particularly mentioned, because the roots of the grass would be most exposed to the summer heat, after the crop had been gathered in, and the effect would be most striking in the shooting of the young green blade after the shower. "Striking image," says Dr. Pusey, "of a world, in all appearance, hopelessly dead, but with a hidden capacity for receiving life! ver. 7."—*Daniel*, p. 480, note.

7. FLOURISH, lit. "shoot," "bud forth," &c., the figure which describes the effects of the rain being thus carried on. Comp. xcii. 7, 12. All these sentences, Calvin observes, depend on the first verse. "Therefore that the righteous may flourish, and the people be prosperous, David prays

- 8 And let him have dominion from sea to sea,  
 And from the river to the ends of the earth.  
 9 Before him let the inhabitants of the wilderness  
 bow,  
 And let his enemies lick the dust.  
 10 Let the kings of Tarshish and the isles render gifts,

that the king may be clothed with righteousness and judgement. It was Solomon's office, indeed, to defend the righteous; but it is Christ's work to make men righteous, because He not only gives to each one his right, but by His Spirit fashions anew their minds. And thus He brings back again righteousness, which else would be banished from the world."

TILL THERE BE NO MORE MOON. See the same expression in Job xiv. 12.

8. In verses 5—7 the prayer and the hope are that this kingdom should endure for ever: in verses 8—11 that it should know no limits but those of the earth itself.

FROM SEA TO SEA. "From the Mediterranean, their Western boundary, to the encircling sea beyond Asia's utmost verge; and from their Eastern boundary, *the river*, the Euphrates, *unto the ends of the earth*." (Pusey, *Daniel*, p. 480.) But perhaps we have only a poetical expression, not to be construed into the prose of geography, or to be explained (as by Rashi and others) as indicating the extent of territory laid down in Exod. xxiii. 31: "I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river." There *may* be an allusion to that passage (comp. Gen. xv. 18), but if so, it is expanded and idealized, as the expression "unto the ends of the earth" (as in ii. 8) shows. The RIVER is,

doubtless, the Euphrates, and it seems probable, therefore, that the Poet had in his eye the actual extent of the kingdom to which Solomon succeeded, who reigned "over all kingdoms from the river Euphrates to the border of Egypt," and that he thus anticipated a dominion co-extensive with the world.

10. TARSHISH, in all probability the same as the Greek *Ταρσησσός*, a great naval mart, and, according to Arrian, a colony of the Phœnicians, in the south of Spain. It traded with Tyre in silver, iron, tin, and lead (Ezek. xxvii. 17). Tarshish and the isles, "the empires on the shores of the Mediterranean," are here mentioned as representatives of all the great maritime and commercial countries of the world.

RENDER GIFTS, or "tribute."

SHEBA, the great South Arabian kingdom, so called after Sheba, one of the sons of Joktan, Gen. x. 28. The mention of this, as well as of Tarshish above, harmonizes very well with the opinion that this Psalm was composed either by or for Solomon. The Queen of Sheba, who came to visit Solomon (1 Kings x. 1), was queen of Sheba in Arabia, and not of Seba, the Cushite kingdom of Ethiopia, as Josephus and some of the Rabbinical writers would make out. The kingdom of Sheba embraced the greater part of the Yemen, or Arabia Felix. See Mr. R. S. Poole's article in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, ii. 1231.

- Let the kings of Sheba and Saba offer presents.  
 11 Yea, let all kings bow themselves down before him,  
 Let all nations serve him.  
 12 For he delivereth the poor when he crieth,  
 And the afflicted, who hath no helper;  
 13 He hath pity on the weak and poor,  
 And the souls of the poor he saveth;  
 14 From oppression and from violence he ransometh their  
 soul,  
 And precious is their blood in his eyes,  
 15 So that they live, and give him of the gold of Sheba,  
 And pray for him alway,

SABA, in E. V. "Seba," first mentioned as among the sons of Cush, Gen. x. 7, and joined with Egypt and Cush (E. V. Ethiopia) in Is. xliii. 3, "a nation of Africa, bordering on or included in Cush, and in Solomon's time independent, and of political importance." According to Josephus, Seba was the ancient name of the Ethiopian island and city of Meroe (*A. J.* ii. 10, § 2), and this must at least have formed part of any ancient Ethiopian kingdom. See Mr. Poole as above, ii. 1189.

PRESENTS. The word, like the preceding "gifts," is a singular noun collective: it only occurs once again, Ezek. xxvii. 15.

The whole verse is in accordance with what we read of Solomon, 1 Kings v. 1, x. 10, 25.

12. FOR HE DELIVERETH. The reason is given why all kings and nations should thus do homage to him who sits on David's throne. He has merited such submission by the exercise of every royal virtue, by the justice and the mercy of his sway, by his deep sympathy with, and compassion for, the poor, by the protection which he extends to them against the ministers of fraud and violence. It is not that he merely covers with the

shadow of his throne all neighbouring nations, and is acknowledged as their political head, but that the bright example which he sets, the Majesty of Righteousness enthroned in his person, compels all to bow before him.

The verse occurs almost word for word in Job xxix. 12, whence it is perhaps borrowed.

14. PRECIOUS IS THEIR BLOOD. He will not see it spilt on the ground, without avenging it. Comp. cxvi. 15, 1 Sam. xxvi. 21, 2 Kings i. 13.

15. Besides the Divine reward which he has merited, the king shall receive also the grateful acknowledgment of those whom he has protected and saved from death.

GOLD OF SHEBA, the offerer being, it is supposed, a native of Sheba. See on ver. 10.

AND PRAY FOR HIM. Then rendering of the P.B.V., "prayer shall be made ever unto him," is quite indefensible. The preposition never occurs in this sense. But the *exclusive* Messianic interpretation seemed to require it. Augustine, however, who here, as in Ps. lxix., supposes not Christ only, but Christ and the Church to be spoken of, explains the prayer as made, not for Christ him-



(And) bless him all the day.

- 16 Let there be abundance of corn in the land,  
 So that on the top of the mountains the fruit  
 thereof rustles like Lebanon,  
 And let men spring forth from the city like the  
 herbs of the earth.
- 17 Let His Name be for ever!  
 Before the sun let His Name be continued,  
 And let men bless themselves in him ;

self, but for the kingdom of Christ : "When we pray *for Him*, we pray for the Church, which is His body :"—a mode of exposition which is most arbitrary, and only leads to endless confusion and perplexity. Dr. Pusey, on the other hand, renders, "And He (the king) shall pray for him (the poor) continually." "The words," he says, "anticipate the revelation by St. Paul, 'He ever liveth to make intercession for them.' (Heb. vii. 25, and Rom. viii. 34.) The words cannot be rendered as in the P.B.V., 'prayer shall be made ever *unto Him* : ' on the other hand, the idiom is used exclusively of the intercession of one nearer to God for one less near." He then gives the instances of Abraham interceding for Abimelech, Gen. xx. 7 ; Moses for Aaron, after the sin of the calf, Deut. ix. 20 ; Samuel for the people, 1 Sam. vii. 5, xii. 19—23 ; the prophet for Jeroboam, 1 Kings xiii. 6 ; of Jeremiah, at Zedekiah's request, Jer. xxxvii. 3 (comp. also Jer. xlii. 2, 20, vii. 16, xi. 14, xiv. 11, xxix. 7) ; of Job for his friends, Job xlii. 10. "These are all the cases in which the Concordances, at least, give the idiom. The verb occurs with other prepositions, Job xlii. 8, and 1 Sam. ii. 25."

16. ON THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS: not mentioned (as something extraordinary) because the mountains were usually the least fruitful parts of

the land, but because they were the most prominent (see ver. 3). The idea is that the whole country should be one bright sunny picture of gladness and fertility, the corn-fields being seen not only in the valleys, but rising, *terrace* above terrace, along the mountain-sides, till they reach their summits. The rustling of the corn-fields in the wind is compared to the rustling of the cedars of Lebanon, so thick shall the corn stand, so rich shall be the harvest.

The common division of the verse is : Let there be abundance of corn in the land on the top of the mountains : Let the fruit thereof rustle, &c. But, thus, the point is lost, or at least obscured. This would seem to imply that there was to be no corn anywhere but *on* the mountains, whereas the object is to make the corn-fields *on the mountains* a principal feature ; and there especially would they be exposed to the action of the wind, and be compared to Lebanon.

LET MEN SPRING FORTH. Comp. xcii. 7, Job v. 25, Is. xxvii. 6. FROM THE CITY, as the dwelling-place of men. Comp. Numb. xxiv. 19.

17. BE CONTINUED, lit. "be propagated," continued in his offspring (comp. xlv. 16), *i.e.* taking the verb as a passive ; or if it be active, "ever make fresh shoots."

BLESS THEMSELVES IN HIM. The same reflective form of the Hebrew

## Let all nations call him happy !

verb occurs in Gen. xxii. 18, xxvi. 4, whereas in xviii. 18 the passive is employed, "and in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." The meaning seems to be, that the king shall be to them the very type and living image of all blessing, so that they can wish for nothing higher or more glorious than that his blessedness should flow forth upon them. There is so much truth in the note with which Delitzsch concludes his commentary on this Psalm, that, though it is rather long, I will quote it: "Solomon," he says, "was in truth a righteous, gracious, God-fearing prince: he established and even extended the kingdom, he ruled over innumerable people, exalted in wisdom and riches above all the kings of the earth; his time was the most happy, the richest in peace and joy, which Israel ever knew. The words of the Psalm were all fulfilled in him, even to the mere particular of the universal dominion which is wished for him. But the end of his reign was not like the beginning and the middle of it. The fair, the glorious, the pure image of the Messiah which he had exhibited waxed pale. In the time of David and Solomon, the hope of believers, which was attached to the kingdom of David, had not yet fully broken with the present. That time, with few exceptions, knew as yet no other Messiah than the Anointed of God, who was David or Solomon himself. When, however, the kingdom, in the person of these its two most glorious representatives, had proved itself unable to bring to perfection the idea of the Messiah or the Anointed of God; and when the line of kings who followed thoroughly disappointed the hope which clung to the kingdom of the present; and when, though here and there, as under Hezekiah, that

hope blazed up for a moment, it was finally extinguished, and men were driven from the present to look to the future,—then, and not till then, did there come a decisive break between the Messianic hope and the existing state of things: the image of the Messiah was now painted on the pure sky of the Future (though of the immediate Future), in colours furnished by the unfulfilment of the older prophecy, and the contradiction between the existing kingdom and its idea; it became more and more, so to speak, something super-earthly, superhuman, extended into the future, the invisible refuge and the invisible aim of a faith despairing of the present, and thereby rendered more spiritual and more heavenly (comp. the Messianic image as described in colours borrowed from our Psalm, Is. xi., Mic. v. 4, 7, Zech. ix. 9, 10). Rightly to understand this, we must free ourselves from the prejudice that the centre of the Old Testament gospel (Heils-Verkündigung) lay in the prophecy of the Messiah. Where is the Messiah set forth as the Redeemer of the world? The Redeemer of the world is Jehovah. The coming (*Parusia*) of Jehovah is the centre of the Old Testament gospel. How this unfolded itself may be made clear by means of a comparison. The Old Testament, in relation to the Day of the New Testament, is Night. In this Night, there rise in opposite directions two stars of Promise. The one describes its path from above downwards: it is the promise of Jehovah, who is about to come. The other describes its path from below upwards: it is the hope which rests on the seed of David, the prophecy of the Son of David, which at first ran a course wholly human, and only earthly. These two stars meet a.

- 18 Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel,  
 Who alone doeth wondrous things !  
 19 And blessed be His glorious Name for ever,  
 And let all the earth be filled with His glory .  
 Amen and Amen.
- 20 Ended are the Prayers of  
 David the Son of Jesse.

last, they mingle so as to form but one ; the Night vanishes, and it is Day. This one star is Jesus Christ, Jehovah and David's Son in one person, the King of Israel and at the same time the Redeemer of the world ; in a word, the God-Man, blessed be **We !**"

18, 19. These verses are a later doxology, appended here to mark the close of the Second Book of the Psalter. Similar doxologies occur at the end of all the other books (see at the end of Ps. xli.). This approaches the nearest to the regular liturgical *Berachah*, or blessing ; for it contains what is required in that, *the Name of Jehovah, the Amen*, and the mention of *the kingdom*, though this last is only implied in "*the Name of His Glory*," and it is not expressly said "*the Name of the Glory of His kingdom*," as it is, for instance, in the *Berachah*, at the pronouncing of which, on the Day of Atonement, the people fell on their faces, so often as the Name of Jehovah passed over the lips of the High Priest.

18. JEHOVAH GOD, see on lix. 5.

WHO ALONE DOETH WONDROUS THINGS. Comp. cxxxvi. 4, and Job ix. 8.

19. HIS GLORIOUS NAME, or "*the Name of His Glory*." Comp. Neh. ix. 5 ; and with the concluding words of the verse, Numb. xiv. 21.

The repeated AMEN, with the conjunction, is in the Old Test. peculiar to those doxologies in the Psalter.

The characteristic difference be-

tween the two Books of the Psalter, and the use of the Divine Names, is preserved even in their concluding doxologies. In the first, God is spoken of as "*Jehovah*, the God of Israel ;" here as "*Jehovah Elohim*, the God of Israel."

20. This verse, again (with which may be compared Job xxxi. 40), does not belong originally either to the Psalm or to the Doxology, though perhaps older than the last. It is remarkable that the elder Kimchi treated the words as an integral portion of the Psalter. He says : "When all shall have been fulfilled, so that Israel, brought back from exile, shall have been restored to their land, and the Messiah, the son of David, rules over them, then will they need no more atonement, and deliverance, and blessing, for they will possess all, and then will be ended the prayers of David the son of Jesse" (quoted by Delitzsch).

As several Psalms bearing the name of David occur in the later Books of the Psalter, it is evident that this notice, "*ended are the Prayers of David*," &c., must have been placed originally at the end of a smaller collection of Psalms, which was supposed to comprise those only which were known as his, or which at the least belonged to his time. It does not prove that all the Psalms of the first two Books were regarded as David's, or that he wrote none of those which in the later Books go by his name.



THE PSALMS.



BOOK III.

PSALMS LXXIII.—LXXXIX.



## PSALM LXXIII.

THERE are some questions which never lose their interest, some problems of which it may be said, that they are ever old and yet ever new. Not the least anxious of such questions are those which deal with God's moral government of the world. They lie close to man's heart, and are ever asking and pressing for solution. They may differ in different times, they may assume various forms, but perhaps no man ever looked thoughtfully on the world as it is without seeing much that was hard to reconcile with a belief in the love and wisdom of God.

One form of this moral difficulty pressed heavily upon the pious Jew under the Old Dispensation. It was this: Why should good men suffer, and bad men prosper? This difficulty was aggravated, we must remember, by what seemed to be the manifest contradiction between the express teaching of his Law and the observed facts of human experience. The Law told him that God was a righteous Judge, meting out to men in this world the due recompense of their deeds. The course of the world, where those who had cast off the fear of God were rich and powerful, made him ready to question this truth, and was a serious stumbling-block to his faith. And further, the Hebrew mind had never risen to the conception of universal law, but was accustomed to regard all visible phenomena as the immediate result of a free Sovereign Will. Direct interposition, even arbitrary interference, was no difficulty to the Jew, to whom Jehovah was the absolute Sovereign of the world, not acting, so far as he could see, according to any established order. Hence it seemed to him inexplicable that the world of life should not reflect perfectly, as in a mirror, the righteousness of God.

This is the perplexity which appears in this Psalm, as it does in the 37th, and also in the Book of Job. Substantially it is the same problem: but it is met differently. In the 37th Psalm the advice given is to wait, to trust in Jehovah, and to rest assured that in the end the seeming disorder will be set right even *in this world*. The

wicked will perish, the enemies of Jehovah will be cut off, and the righteous will be preserved from evil and inherit the land. Thus God suffers wickedness *for a time*, only the more signally to manifest His righteousness in overthrowing it. That is the first, the simplest, the most obvious solution of the difficulty. In the Book of Job, where the sorrow and the perplexity are the darkest, where the question lies upon the heart "heavy as lead, and deep almost as life," the sufferer finds no such consolation. As a Gentile, he has no need to reconcile his experience with the sanctions of the Pentateuch. But he has to do that which is not less hard, he has to reconcile it with a life's knowledge of God, and a life's love of God. He searches his heart, he lays bare his life, he is conscious of no transgression, and he cannot understand why chastisement should be laid upon him, whilst the most daring offenders against the Majesty of God escape with impunity. Sometimes with a bitterness that cannot be repressed, sometimes with a sorrow hushing itself into resignation, he still turns to God; he would fain stand before His judgement-seat, plead with Him his cause, and receive a righteous sentence. But Job does not find the solution of the Psalmist. He is driven to find that all is a mystery. God will not give an account of any of His matters. "I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him" (Job xxiii.). And when Jehovah appears at the end of the book, it is to show the folly of man, who would presume to think that, short-sighted and ignorant as he is, he can fathom the councils of the Most High. He appears, not to lift the veil of mystery, but to teach the need of humiliation and the blessedness or faith.\*

In this Psalm, again, a different conclusion is arrived at. In part it is the same as that which has already met us in Psalm xxxvii., in part it is far higher. The Psalmist here is not content merely with visible retribution in this world. He sees it indeed in the case of the ungodly. When he was tempted to envy their lot, when he had all but yielded to the sophistry of those who would have persuaded him to be even as they, the temptation was subdued by the reflection that such

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\* There is a difficulty, no doubt, in reconciling this solution, or rather non-solution of the problem, with that which is given subsequently in the historical conclusion of the Books. There we find Job recompensed *in this life* for all his sufferings. If the historical parts of the Book are by the same author as the dialogue, then we must suppose that when Job is brought to confess his own vileness and his own ignorance and presumption, then, and not till then, does God reward him with temporal prosperity.



prosperity came to an end as sudden as it was terrible. But he does not place over against this, on the other side, an earthly portion of honour and happiness for the just. Their portion is in God. He is the stay and the satisfaction of their hearts now. He will take them to Himself and to glory hereafter. This conviction it is which finally chases away the shadows of doubt, and brings light and peace into his soul. And this conviction is the more remarkable, because it is reached in spite of the distinct promise made of temporal recompense to piety, and in the absence of a full and definite Revelation with regard to the life to come. In the clear light of another world and its certain recompenses, such perplexities either vanish or lose much of their sharpness. When we confess that God's righteousness has a larger theatre for its display than this world and the years of man, we need not draw hasty conclusions from the "slight whisper" of His ways which reaches us here.

It is an interesting question suggested by this Psalm, but one which can only be touched on here, how far there is anything in common between doubts, such as those which perplexed the ancient Hebrews, and those by which modern thinkers are harassed.\* There are some persons, who now, as of old, are troubled by the moral aspect of the world. To some, this perplexity is even aggravated by the disclosures of Revelation. And men of pious minds have been shaken to their inmost centre by the appalling prospect of the everlasting punishment of the wicked. But the difficulties, which are, properly speaking, modern difficulties, are of another kind. They are, at least in their source, speculative rather than moral. The observed uniformity of nature, the indissoluble chain of cause and effect, the absolute certainty of the laws by which all visible phenomena are governed, these are now the stumbling-blocks even to devout minds. How, it is asked, can we reconcile these things with the belief in a Personal God, or at least with an ever-active Personal Will? Had the world ever a Maker? or, if it had, does He still control and guide it? Knowing as we do that the order of cause and effect is ever the same, how can we accept miracles or Divine interpositions of any kind? What avails prayer, when every event that happens has been ordained from eternity? How can any words of man interrupt the march of the Universe? Ships are wrecked, and harvests are

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\* See Dr. A. S. Farrar's "*Bampton Lectures*:" Lecture i. p. 7, note.

blighted, and famine and pestilence walk the earth, not because men have forgotten to pray, but in accordance with the unerring laws which storm, and blight, and disease obey. Such are some of the thoughts—the birth, it may be said, of modern science—which haunt and vex men now.

Difficulties like these are not touched upon in Scripture. But the spirit in which all difficulties, all doubts, should be met, is the same. If the answer lies in a region above and beyond us, our true wisdom is to wait in humble dependence upon God, in active fulfilment of what we can see to be our duty, till the day dawn and the shadows flee away. And it is this which Scripture teaches us in this Psalm, in Job, and in that other Book, which is such a wonderful record of a doubting self-tormenting spirit, the Book of Ecclesiastes. It has been said that the Book of Job and the 73rd Psalm “crush free thought.”\* It would have been truer to say that they teach us that there are heights which we cannot reach, depths which the intellect of man cannot fathom ; that God’s ways are past finding out ; that difficulties, perplexities, sorrows, are best healed and forgotten in the Light which streams from His throne, in the Love which by His Spirit is shed abroad in the heart.

But the Psalm teaches us also a lesson of forbearance towards the doubter. It is a lesson perhaps just now peculiarly needed. Christian sympathy is felt, Christian charity is extended, towards every form of misery, whether mental or bodily, except toward that which is often the acutest of all, the anguish of doubt. Here it seems as if coldness, suspicion, even denunciation, were justifiable. And yet doubt, even to the verge of scepticism, as is plain from this Psalm, may be no proof of a bad and corrupt heart ; it may rather be the evidence of an honest one. Doubt may spring from the very depth and earnestness of a man’s faith. In the case of the Psalmist, as in the case of Job, that which lay at the bottom of the doubt, that which made it a thing so full of anguish, was the deep-rooted conviction of the righteousness of God. Unbelief does not doubt, faith doubts.† And God permits the doubt in His truest and noblest servants, as our Lord did in the case of Thomas, that He may thereby plant their feet the more firmly on the rock of His own everlasting truth. There is perhaps no Psalm in which Faith asserts

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\* Guinet, *Œuvres* t. i. c. 5, § 4.

† See Archbishop Whately, *Annotations on Bacon's Essays*, pp. 358, 359.

itself so triumphantly, cleaves to God with such words of lofty hope and affection, and that precisely because in no other instance has the fire been so searching, the test of faith so severe. It may be well to remember this when we see a noble soul compassed about with darkness, yet struggling to the light, lest we "vex one whom God has smitten, and tell of the pain of His wounded ones" (Ps. lxix. 26).

The Psalm consists of two parts :—

I. The Psalmist tells the story of the doubts which had assailed him, the temptation to which he had nearly succumbed. Ver. 1—14.

II. He confesses the sinfulness of these doubts, and explains how he had been enabled to overcome them. Ver. 15—28.

These principal portions have their further subdivisions.

I. *a.* First we have, by way of introduction, the conviction to which his struggle with doubt brought him, ver. 1 ; then the general statement of his offence, ver. 2, 3.

*b.* The reason of which is more fully explained to be the prosperity of the wicked, ver. 4, 5 ; and their insolence and pride in consequence, ver. 6—11.

*c.* The comfortless conclusion which he had thence drawn, ver. 12—14.

II. *a.* By way of transition, he tells how he had been led to acknowledge the impiety of this conclusion, and how, seeking for a deeper, truer view, he had come to the sanctuary of God, ver. 15—17, where he had seen the *sudden* and *fearful* end of the wicked, ver. 18—20, and so had learned the *folly* of his own speculation.

*b.* Thus recovering from the almost fatal shock which his faith had received, he returns to a sense of his true position. God holds him by his right hand, God guides him for the present, and will bring him to a glorious end, ver. 23, 24 ; hence he rejoices in the thought that God is his great and only possession, ver. 25, 26.

*c.* The general conclusion that departure from God is death and destruction ; that in His presence and in nearness to Him are to be found joy and safety, ver. 27, 28.

[A PSALM OF ASAPH.\*]

- 1 SURELY God is good to Israel,  
(Even) to such as are of a pure heart.
- 2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone,  
My steps had well nigh slipt.
- 3 For I was envious at the arrogant,

1. SURELY. This particle, which occurs twice again in this Psalm, is rendered differently in each case by the E. V. ; here *truly*, in ver. 13 *verily*, in ver. 18 *surely* ; but one rendering should be kept throughout. Here it is used affirmatively, and expresses the satisfaction with which the conclusion has been arrived at, after all the anxious questionings and debates through which the Psalmist has passed. "Yes, it is so ; after all, God is good, notwithstanding all my doubts." It thus implies at the same time a tacit opposition to a different view of the case, such as that which is described afterwards. "Fresh from the conflict, he somewhat abruptly opens the Psalm with the confident enunciation of the truth, of which victory over doubt had now made him more, and more intelligently, sure than ever, that God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." — *Essential Coherence of the Old and New Testament*, by my brother, the Rev. T. T. Perowne, p. 85, to which I may perhaps be permitted to refer for a clear and satisfactory view of the whole Psalm.

It is of importance to remark that the result of the conflict is stated before the conflict itself is described. There is no parade of doubt merely as doubt. He states *first*, and in the

most natural way, the *final* conviction of his heart.

ISRAEL. The next clause limits this, and reminds us that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." To the true Israel God is Love : to them "all things work together for good."

OF A PURE HEART. Comp. Matt. v. 8.

2. BUT AS FOR ME. The pronoun is emphatic. He places himself, with shame and sorrow, almost in opposition to that Israel of God of which he had just spoken. He has in view the happiness of those who had felt no doubt. Calvin somewhat differently explains : Even I, with all my knowledge and advantages, I, who ought to have known better.

GONE, lit. "inclined," not so much in the sense of being bent under him, as rather of being turned aside, out of the way, as in Numb. xx. 17, 2 Sam. ii. 19, 21, &c. The verb in the next clause expresses the giving way from weakness, fear, &c., HAD . . . SLIPT, lit. "were poured out" like water.

3. ENVIOUS, as in xxxvii. 1, Prov. xxiii. 17, wishing that his lot were like theirs who seemed to be the favourites of Heaven. Calvin quotes the story of Dionysius the Less, who,

\* See note on Psalm l. p. 202.

- When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- 4 For they have no bands in their death,  
And their strength (continues) firm.
  - 5 Into the same trouble as (other) men they come not  
Neither are they plagued like (other) folk.
  - 6 Therefore pride is as a chain about their neck ;  
Violence covereth them as a garment.

having sacrilegiously plundered a temple, and having sailed safely home, said : "Do you see that the gods smile upon sacrilege?" The prosperity and impunity of the wicked invite others to follow their example.

THE ARROGANT. The word denotes those whose pride and infatuation amount almost to madness. It is difficult to find an exact equivalent in English. It occurs in v. 5, and again in lxxv. 4.

4. BANDS. This word "bands," or "tight cords," or "fettters," occurs only once besides, Is. lviii. 6. This is the simplest and most straightforward rendering of the words, "They have no bands in their death" (lit. *at* or *for* their death, *i.e.* when they die). The objection brought against it, that such a meaning is at variance with the general scope of the Psalm, the object of which is not to represent the *end* of the ungodly as happy (the very reverse is asserted, ver. 17, &c.), but to describe the general prosperity of their *lives*, is of no great force. For we must remember that the Psalmist is describing here not the fact, but *what seemed to him* to be the fact, in a state of mind which he confesses to have been unhealthy. Comp. Job xxi. 13, and see the note on ver. 18 of this Psalm. Otherwise it would be possible to render, "For no bands (of suffering) (bring them) to their death." No

fettters are so to speak laid upon their limbs, so that they should be delivered over bound to their great enemy. They are not beset with sorrows, sufferings, miseries, which by impairing health and strength bring them to death. This sense has been very well given in the P. B. V., which follows Luther :—

"For they are in no peil of death,  
But are lusty and strong,"

5. The literal rendering of this verse would be :—

"In the trouble of man they are not,  
And with mankind they are not  
plagued."

The first word used to express *man* is that which denotes man in his frailty and weakness. The other is the most general term, Adam, man as made of the dust of the earth. These men seem exempt not only from the frailties and infirmities of men, but even from the common lot of men. They appear almost to be tempered and moulded of a finer clay than ordinary human nature.

PLAGUED, lit. "smitten," *i.e.* of God ; a word used especially of Divine chastisement. Comp. Is. liii. 4.

6. IS AS A CHAIN ABOUT THEIR NECK, or, "hath encircled their neck." See for the same figure, Prov. i. 9, iii. 22. The neck is regarded as the seat of pride : comp. lxxv. 5, Is. iii. 16.

- 7 Their eye goeth forth from fatness ;  
 The imaginations of (their) heart overflow.  
 8 They scoff and speak wickedly,  
 Of oppression loftily do they speak.  
 9 They have set in the heavens their mouth,  
 And their tongue walketh through the earth.  
 10 Therefore turn his people after them,

7. FROM FATNESS, *i.e.* from a sleek countenance, conveying in itself the impression of worldly ease and enjoyment. The whole figure is highly expressive. It is a picture of that proud satisfaction which so often shines in the eyes of well-to-do men of the world.

OVERFLOW. The metaphor is from a swollen river which rises above its banks. The verb is used absolutely, as in Hab. i. 11, "Then (his) spirit swells and overflows," where the same figure is employed in describing the pride and insolence of the Chaldeans. See also Is. viii. 8. This is better than, with the E.V., to take the verb as transitive, "They have more than heart could wish" (*lit.* they have exceeded the imaginations of the heart): the two clauses of the verse correspond, the proud look being an index of the proud heart; these being followed, in the next verse, by the proud spirit.

8. According to the Masoretic punctuation, the verse would be arranged thus:—

"They scoff and speak wickedly of oppression,  
 Loftily do they speak."

LOFTILY, or "from on high," not "against the Most High," as the P. B. V.

9. IN THE HEAVENS, not "against the heavens." The stature of these men seems to swell till it reaches heaven. Thence they issue their

proud commands, the whole earth being the theatre of their action.

10. THEREFORE. This is co-ordinate with the "therefore" in ver. 6. Both depend on the statement in ver. 4, 5. Because the wicked have no bands, &c., therefore pride compasseth them, &c., and therefore others are induced to follow their example.

HIS PEOPLE, instead of "*their* people." Either (1), in accordance with a common Hebrew idiom, there is an abrupt transition from the plural to the singular, an individual being now substituted for the mass. "*His* people," in this sense, are the crowd who attach themselves to *one and another* of these prosperous sinners, that they may share *his* prosperity. Or (2), the pronoun refers to God. Even His people, forsaking Him, are led away by the evil example, just as the Psalmist confesses he himself was.

AFTER THEM, *lit.* "thither," *i.e.* to the persons before described, and, as is implied, *away from* God. The next clause of the verse is more difficult of explanation. The E. V. by its rendering, "And waters of a full (cup) are wrung out to them," probably means us to understand that the people of God, when they turn hither, *i.e.* to the consideration of the prosperity of the wicked, are filled with sorrow, drink as it were the cup of tears; the image being the same as in lxxx. 5. The P. B. V. comes nearer to the mark:—

And at the full stream would slake their thirst :

11 And they say : " How doth God know ?

And is their knowledge in the Most High ? "

12 Lo, these are the wicked,

And (these men), ever prosperous, have increased  
(their) wealth.

13 Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart,

And washed my hands in innocence,

14 And have been plagued all the day,

And chastened every morning.

" Therefore fall the people unto  
them,

And thereout suck they no small  
advantage,"—

only that apparently in the second clause the pronoun *they* refers, not to the people, but to the wicked mentioned before. Whereas it is the people, the crowd of hangers-on, who gather like sheep to the water-trough, who suck this advantage, such as it is, as the reward of their apostasy.

AND AT THE FULL STREAM, &c. lit. "and fulness of water is drained by them;" *i.e.* broad and deep are the waters of sinful pleasures, which they, in their infatuation, drink.

11. AND THEY SAY. The reference of the pronoun has again been disputed. Mostly it is referred to those just spoken of, who have been led astray by the prosperity of the wicked to follow them. Hupfeld thinks it is the wicked themselves (of ver. 3) who thus speak; and certainly the boldness of the language employed, which questions the very being of a God, is more natural in the mouth of those whose long prosperity and long security have made them unmindful of His providence.

But much depends on the view we take of the next three verses. Do these continue the speech, or are they

the reflection of the Poet himself? In this case the words must be throughout the words of those who have been tempted and led astray by the untroubled happiness of the wicked. They adopt their practically atheistical principles; they ask, "How doth God know?" &c.; they point, with a triumph not unmingled with bitterness, at their success: Lo, these are the ungodly, whose sudden and utter overthrow we have been taught to expect; they come to the conclusion that the fear of God is in vain, for it does not save a man from suffering and disappointment, and thus they justify their choice. It is certainly in favour of this view that ver. 15 seems naturally to introduce the reflections of the Psalmist himself, who had almost been carried away by the same sophistry. On the other hand, Hengstenberg and Hupfeld suppose the reflections of the Psalmist to begin at ver. 12. Verses 13, 14 will then describe the temptation which pressed upon him, the thoughts which forced themselves into his mind, and which, as verses 15, 16 show, he only with difficulty repressed. He did utter his disappointment, he was gliding on to something worse, to the atheistic language of ver. 11, when he checks himself as in ver. 15. In favour of

- 15 If I had said, "Let me utter (words) like these."  
 Lo, I should have been faithless to the generation of  
 Thy children.
- 16 And when I pondered that I might know this,  
 It was a trouble in mine eyes ;
- 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God,  
 (Until) I considered their latter end.
- 18 Surely in slippery places dost Thou set them,

this interpretation it may be urged that the LXX. have introduced a *καὶ εἶπα* at the beginning of ver. 13.

15. IF I HAD SAID: if I had given way to the temptation to utter thoughts and misgivings like these. "The Hebrew Psalmist," it has been well said, "instead of telling his painful misgivings, harboured them in God's presence till he found the solution. The delicacy exhibited in forbearing unnecessarily to shake the faith of others is a measure of the disinterestedness of the doubter."—FARRAR, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 27.

THE GENERATION OF THY CHILDREN. As in xiv. 5, "the generation of the righteous." So the people at large are called, Dent. xiv. 1. Here, however, the true Israel, "the pure of heart," are meant. But the *individual* is not called a son of God under the Old Testament, except officially, as in ii. 7.

16. I PONDERED. See the same use of the verb in lxxvii. 5, "the days of old ;" Prov. xvi. 9, "one's way." THAT I MIGHT KNOW, *i.e.* reconcile all that I saw with the great fact of God's moral government.

A TROUBLE, or a weariness, as of a great burden laid upon me (comp. Eccles. viii. 17). Thought could not solve the problem. The brain grew wearier, and the heart heavier. Light and peace come to us, not by thinking,

but by faith. "In Thy Light we shall see Light." God Himself was the Teacher.

17. THE SANCTUARY is the place of His teaching ; not heaven, but the Temple, as the place of His special manifestation, not only by Urim and Thummim, but in direct answer to prayer. There, in some hour of fervent, secret prayer, like that of Hannah (1 Sam. i. 13 : comp. Luke xviii. 10), or perhaps in some solemn service—it may have been (who can tell ?) through the words of some inspired Psalm—a conviction of the truth broke upon him.

18. The conclusion is remarkable. That which dispels the Psalmist's doubts, and restores his faith, is the end of the ungodly in this world,—their sudden reverses, their terrible overthrow in the very bosom of their prosperity. Hitherto he has not taken notice of this fact as he ought : he has been so dazzled with the prosperity of the wicked, that he has forgotten by what appalling judgements God vindicates His righteousness. He does not follow them into the next world. His eye cannot see beyond the grave. Even the great horror of an evil conscience is scarcely, in his view, a part of their punishment, unless the expression "because of terrors," in ver. 19, may be supposed to point that way ; which, however, is very doubtful.



Thou hast cast them down to ruin.

19 How are they brought to desolation as in a moment,  
They have come to an end, they are cut off because  
of terrors.

20 As a dream, when one awaketh,  
So, O Lord, when Thou stirrest up Thyself, dost  
Thou despise their image.

It is singular that in Job xxi. 13 (comp. ix. 23) it is reckoned as an element in the good fortune of the wicked, that they die not by a lingering disease, but suddenly; but it may be that Job, perplexed and eager to make everything tell on his side which his friends would urge against him, is determined not to admit their inference from the facts of Divine Providence. Otherwise this passage of Job supports the obvious rendering of ver. 4, "They do not die by lingering diseases, but easily," this being the mistaken view afterwards corrected.

"We come to the conclusion," it has been well said, "that in the case of the wicked this Psalm does not plainly and undeniably teach that punishment awaits them after death; but only that in estimating their condition it is necessary, in order to vindicate the justice of God, to take in their whole career, and set over against their great prosperity the sudden and fearful reverses and destruction which they not unfrequently encounter. But in turning to the other side of the comparison, the case of the righteous, we are not met by the thought, that as the prosperity of the wicked is but the preparation for their ruin, so the adversity of the godly is but an introduction to worldly wealth and honour. That thought is not foreign to the Old Testament writers (see Psalm xxxvii. 9—11).

But it is not so much as hinted at here. The daily chastening may continue, flesh and heart may fail, but God is good to Israel notwithstanding. He is their portion, their guide, their help, while they live, and He will take them to His glorious presence when they die. 'Nevertheless I am continually with Thee,' &c. The New Testament has nothing higher or more spiritual than this."—*Essential Coherence*, &c., pp. 86, 87.

19. This verse, taken in connection with ver. 27, seems almost to point, as Ewald has remarked, to some particular instance of the Divine judgement which had recently been witnessed.

20. AS A DREAM, the unreality of which is only seen when a man awakes. Comp. xc. 5; Job xx. 8.

WHEN THOU STIRREST UP THYSELF. The verb in Hebrew is a different one from that in the previous clause, although in the E. V. both are in this passage rendered by the same word. In xxxv. 23, where the two verbs also occur together, our translators have employed two different words to express them, and I have thought it best to do so here. The figure is carried on. When God thus awakes to judgement, the image, the shadow of the wicked passes from Him, as a dream from the mind of a sleeper. He "despises" it, as a man in his waking moments thinks lightly of some horrible dream.

- 21 For my heart grew bitter,  
 And I was pricked in my reins,  
 22 So brutish was I myself and ignorant,  
 I became a very beast before Thee.  
 23 And yet, as for me,—I am always with Thee,  
 Thou hast holden my right hand ;  
 24 Thou wilt guide me in Thy counsel,

21. FOR. There is no reason to depart from this, the common meaning of the particle. It explains the whole of the previous struggle. I was tempted to think thus, *for* I brooded over these difficulties till I became no better than the dumb cattle. So it ever is. Man does not show wisdom when he wearies himself to no purpose with the moral and speculative problems which beset him. His highest wisdom is to stay himself upon God.

22. SO BRUTISH, lit. "And I myself (the pronoun is emphatic) was brutish." Comp. Prov. xxx. 2, 3.

A VERY BEAST. The noun is in the plural, which is here used in a superlative or emphatic sense, so that we need not render "like the beasts," still less "like Behemoth," as though some particular beast were meant.

23. The words that follow, in their exquisite beauty, need not comment or interpretation, but a heart in unison with them. They lift us up above the world, above doubts, and fears, and perplexities, into a higher and holier atmosphere: we breathe the air of heaven. The man who can truly use these words is not one who has "crushed free thought," but one who has seen all his doubts swallowed up in the full light of God's love. "Though all else in heaven and earth should fail, the one true everlasting Friend abides."—*Ewald*.

It strangely mars the force of such a passage to limit its application to

this life. To render the words of ver. 24 as Grotius and others do, "Thou shalt receive me with honour," (in allusion to David as placed on the throne), or "bring me to honour," *i.e.* in this world, is to rob the whole passage of its divine significance. The verb "Thou shalt take me" is the same as that employed in xlix. 15, and Gen. v. 24, to which last passage there is doubtless an allusion in both places in the Psalms. But this Psalm is an advance on Ps. xlix.

The great difference, though with essential points of contact, between the hope of the life to come, as portrayed even in such a passage as this, and what we read in the New Testament, will best be understood by comparing the language here with St. Paul's language in the 4th and 5th chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians.

THOU HAST HOLDEN; either implying that thus he had been saved from falling altogether, when his feet were almost gone (ver. 2), or perhaps rather as stating more broadly the ground of his abiding communion with God, at all times and under all circumstances. Comp. lxxiii. 8.

24. THOU WILT GUIDE ME. "With confidence he commits himself to the Divine guidance, though he does not see clearly the mystery of the Divine purpose (counsel) in that guidance."—*Delitzsch*. It is because he has forgotten to look to that counsel, and to

- And afterward Thou wilt take me to glory.  
 25 Whom have I in heaven but Thee?  
 And beside Thee there is none upon earth in whom I  
 delight.  
 26 Though my flesh and my heart fail,  
 Yet God is the rock of my heart and my portion for  
 ever.  
 27 For behold they that are far from Thee must perish;  
 Thou hast destroyed every one that goeth a whoring  
 from Thee.  
 28 But as for me—to draw near to God is good for me;  
 I have made in the Lord Jehovah my refuge,  
 That I may tell of all Thy works.

trust in that counsel, that his faith has received so startling a shock.

25. BUT THEE, or "beside Thee," lit. "*with* Thee." These words are to be supplied from the next clause, a word or a phrase belonging to two clauses being commonly in Hebrew expressed only in one.

(THERE IS) NONE, &c., lit. "I have no delight (in any) upon the earth."

26. FAIL, lit. "have failed," *i.e.* "may have failed."

27. The figure is very common. Israel is the spouse of God, and idolatry is a breaking of the marriage vow. But here it seems to be used, not merely of idolatry, but of departure from God such as that described in ver. 10.

28. At the end of this verse the LXX. add, "in the gates of the daughter of Zion," whence it has passed though the Vulgate into our Prayer-book Version.

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## PSALM LXXIV

THIS Psalm and the Seventy-ninth both refer to the same calamity, and were, it may reasonably be conjectured, written by the same author. Both Psalms deplore the rejection of the nation, the occupation of Jerusalem by a foreign army, and the profanation of the

Sanctuary : but the Seventy-fourth dwells chiefly on the destruction of the Temple ; the Seventy-ninth on the terrible slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Assuming that both Psalms refer to the same event, we have to choose between two periods of Jewish history, and only two, to which the language of the Sacred Poet could reasonably refer. The description might apply either to the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, or to the insolent oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes ; and with one as the other of these two occasions it has been usually connected.

There are in this Psalm some expressions which are most readily explained on the supposition that it was composed in the time of the Maccabees.

(a) One of these is the complaint (ver. 9), "There is no Prophet any more." It is difficult to understand how such a complaint could have been uttered when Jeremiah and Ezekiel were both living ; or with what truth it could be added, "Neither is there any among us who knoweth how long," when Jeremiah had distinctly foretold that the duration of the Captivity should be seventy years (Jer. xxv. 11, xxix. 10).<sup>\*</sup> On the other hand, such words are perfectly natural in the mouth of a poet of the Maccabean age. For 250 years, from the death of Malachi, the voice of Prophecy had been silent. During that long interval, no inspired messenger had appeared to declare and to interpret the will of God to His people. And how keenly sensible they were of the greatness of their loss in this respect we learn from the frequent allusions to it in the First Book of Maccabees (iv. 46, ix. 27, xiv. 41). The language of this Psalm, then, is but the expression of what we know to have been the national feeling at that time.

(b) Another feature of this Psalm is the description of the profanation of the Sanctuary, and the erection there of the signs (ver. 4), the military standards or religious emblems, of the heathen. The Book of Maccabees presents the same picture. There we read that Antiochus, on his return from the second Egyptian campaign, "entered proudly into the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof" (i. 21). Two years later, the king sent a division of his army against

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<sup>\*</sup> It has been suggested to me by a friend, that this complaint would not be unsuitable to the time of Esarhaddon's invasion (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11). That period was singularly barren in prophets.

Jerusalem, which fell upon the city, and having made a great slaughter of the inhabitants, plundered it, set it on fire, pulled down the houses and walls, and carried away women and children and cattle. A strong garrison was placed in the city of David, the sanctuary was polluted, and the sabbaths and festival days profaned. The abomination of desolation was set up on the altar, and sacrifice offered "on the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God" (1 Macc. i. 30—59. See also ii. 8—12, iii. 48—51).

On the other hand it has been urged, that there is nothing in the language of the Psalm inconsistent with the supposition that it refers to the Chaldean invasion.

Further, both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, it has been observed, indulge in a similar strain. Thus the former sings: "Her gates are sunk into the ground; He hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the Law is no more; *her prophets also find no vision from Jehovah*" (Lam. ii. 9). And the latter threatens: "Then shall they seek a vision of the prophet: but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients" (Ezek. vii. 26). Neither of these passages, however, so absolutely denies the existence of a prophet as that in the Psalm. One other expression in the Psalm, ver. 3, "Lift up Thy feet to the everlasting ruins," seems, it must be confessed, most suitable in the mouth of an exile during the Babylonish captivity.

The relation both of this Psalm and the Seventy-ninth to the writings of Jeremiah presents another difficulty. Jeremiah x. 25 is almost word for word the same as Ps. lxxix. 6, 7. Again, Lam. ii. 2 resembles lxxiv. 7, and Lam. ii. 7 is very similar to lxxiv. 4; and, as we have already seen, there is at least a point of connection between lxxiv. 9 and Lam. ii. 9; besides these, other minor similarities may be observed, on a comparison of the Psalmist with the Prophet. Now we know that it is the habit of Jeremiah to quote largely and frequently from other writers, from the Psalms and the Prophets. But on either of the hypotheses above mentioned, as to the date of our two Psalms, the writer of these must have imitated the language of Jeremiah. This is, of course, quite possible. A similar problem, and a very interesting one, arises out of the relation of Jeremiah to the later chapters of Isaiah, xl.—lxvi. That one of the two writers was familiar with the other is beyond a doubt.

On the whole, I am inclined to think that this Psalm may be most naturally explained by events that took place in the time of the

Maccabees. If, in any particular, the language seems too strong as applied to that time—as, for instance, the description of the burning of the Temple—this may be as readily explained by poetic exaggeration, as ver. 9 is so explained by those who hold the opposite view. Or, perhaps, as Calvin suggests, the writer, overcome by the mournful spectacle before his eyes, could not but carry back his thoughts to the earlier catastrophe, and thence borrowed some images, blending in his imagination the two calamities in one.

The Psalm does not consist of any regular system of strophes.

It opens with a cry of complaint, and a prayer that God would remember His people in their desolation. Ver. 1—3.

It then pictures the triumph of the enemy, the destruction of the sanctuary, and the loss of Divine counsel in the day of peril. Ver. 4—9.

Then again there is an appeal to God for help (ver. 10, 11), and a calling to mind of God's past wonders on behalf of His people, and of His Almighty power as seen in the world of Nature. Ver. 12—17.

And finally, based upon this, a prayer that God would not suffer reproach to be brought upon His own Name, by the triumph of the heathen over His people. Ver. 22, 23.

[A MASCHIL OF ASAPH.\*]

- 1 WHY, O God, hast Thou cast us off for ever,  
     Why doth Thine anger smoke against the sheep of  
     Thy pasture?  
 2 Remember Thy congregation which Thou hast  
     purchased of old,

1. HAST THOU CAST OFF. The object here may be supplied from the next clause, viz. "the sheep of Thy pasture."

WHY DOTTH THINE ANGER SMOKE. For the figure, compare xviii. 8, where see note. There is a change in the tenses, the preterite in the first clause being used to denote *the act* of casting off, the future (present) here to denote the continuance of the same.

SHEEP OF THY PASTURE; a favourite figure in those Psalms which are ascribed to Asaph. It is found also in Jer. xxiii. 1. The name contains in itself an appeal to the compassion and tender care of the shepherd. Can the shepherd slay his sheep?

2. THOU HAST PURCHASED . . . THOU HAST RANSOMED. Both verbs

\* See note on Ps. l. p. 202.

Which Thou hast ransomed to be the tribe of Thine inheritance,

(And) the mount Zion wherein Thou hast dwelt.

3 Lift up Thy feet unto the everlasting ruins!

The enemy hath laid waste all in the sanctuary;

contain in themselves a reason why God should remember His people. The first verb may mean only *to get, to acquire*, the idea of a price paid for the acquisition being not necessarily contained in the word. So Gen. iv. 1, "I have *gotten* a man with (the help of) Jehovah:" Gen. xiv. 22, "the most High God, *possessor* of heaven and earth:" Prov. viii. 22, "Jehovah *possessed* me in the beginning of His way." See Acts xx. 28. "The church of God, which He purchased (acquired) with His own blood." 1 Tim. iii. 13: "Purchase (acquire) to themselves a good degree." Comp. Eph. i. 14, and 1 Thess. v. 9, where see Vaughan's note. The second verb (*gâ-al, to ransom*, whence *goël*), from a root meaning *to loosen*, is the technical word for every kind of redemption under the Law, whether of fields (Lev. xxv. 25), tithes (Lev. xxvii. 31, 33), or slaves (Lev. xxv. 48, 49). The next of kin was called *Goël*, because on him devolved the duty of redeeming land which his poor relation had been compelled to sell (Lev. xxv. 25), and also because on him fell the obligation of redeeming, demanding satisfaction for, the murder of a kinsman (Num. xxxv. 12, 19, and often).

OF OLD, as in xliv. 2, with reference, doubtless, to the deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

THE TRIBE. Such is, apparently, the meaning of the word here, the whole nation being regarded, not as many tribes, but as one tribe, probably in reference to other nations.

The same expression occurs besides only in Jeremiah x. 16, and li. 19, whereas in Isaiah lxiii. 17 we have the plural form, "*the tribes of Thine inheritance*." The E. V. has here "*rod of Thine inheritance*," and so Luther, Calvin, and others, and the word frequently means "*rod, staff*," (as in xxiii. 4), *sceptre* (as xlv. 6), &c.

THE CONGREGATION represents the people in their religious aspect, THE TRIBE in their national and political aspect. The two great facts, the redemption from Egypt and God's dwelling in the midst of them, the one of which was preparatory to the other, here, as in the Sixty-eighth Psalm, seem to sum up all their history.

3. LIFT UP THY FEET (lit. *foot-steps*, the word being a poetical one), *i.e.* Come speedily to visit those ruins which seem as though they would never be repaired. A similar phrase (though the words in the original are different) occurs in Gen. xxix. 1, where it is said of Jacob, that after his vision "he lifted up his feet," a phrase "which in Eastern language still signifies to walk quickly, to reach out, to be in good earnest, not to hesitate."—KITTO, *Bible Illustrations*, i. 305.

EVERLASTING, the same word as in ver. 1, "for ever," *i.e.* which seem to human impatience, *looking forward*, as if they would never be built again.

IN THE SANCTUARY. This is his greatest grief. His country has been laid waste with fire and sword, his friends slain or carried into captivity, but there is no thought so full of pain

4 Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of Thine assembly ;

They have set up their signs as signs.

5 It seems as though one lifted up on high  
Axes against the thickets of the wood :

as this, that the holy and beautiful house wherein his fathers worshipt has been plundered and desecrated by a heathen soldiery. Instead of the psalms, and hymns, and sacred anthems which once echoed within those walls, has been heard the brutal shout of the fierce invaders, roaring like lions (such is the meaning of the word in the next verse) over their prey. Heathen emblems, military and religious, have displaced the emblems of Jehovah. The magnificent carved work of the Temple, such as the cherubim, and the palms, and the pillars, with pomegranates and lily-work (1 Kings vi. 15, &c. if the allusion be to the First Temple), which adorned it, have been hewed down as remorselessly as a man would cut down so much wood in the forest. And then that splendid pile, so full of sacred memories, so dear to the heart of every true Israelite, has been set on fire, and left to perish in the flames. Such is the scene as it passes again before the eyes of his mind.

4. THINE ASSEMBLY, *i.e.* here evidently "place of assembly," a word originally applied to the Mosiac tabernacle, and afterwards to the great national festivals. Here it would seem the Temple is meant. Comp. Lam. ii. 6, where the word occurs in both senses. "He hath destroyed *His assembly* (or temple ; E. V. *His places of assembly*) . . . He hath caused to be forgotten *solemn feast and sabbath*," &c.

THEIR SIGNS. An emphasis lies on the pronoun ; comp. ver. 9. I have retained the literal rendering,

together with the ambiguity of the original. These were either military ensigns, standards, trophies, and the like (as in Num. ii. 2 ff.), the Temple having been turned into a barrack, or religious emblems, heathen rites and ceremonies, perhaps even idols, by which the temple and altar of Jehovah were profaned. (In this last sense the words would aptly describe the state of things under Antiochus Epiphanes. Comp. 1 Macc. i. 54 and 59, "Now the five-and-twentieth day of the month they did sacrifice upon the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God." Again in chap. iii. 48, it is said that "the heathen had sought to paint the likeness of their images" in the book of the Law.) This last sense is further confirmed by the use of the word in ver. 9. But both meanings may be combined, the word *sign* being here used in its most general sense of all symbols of a foreign power of whatever kind.

5. This verse has been completely misunderstood by our translators, who have here followed Calvin, as well as by nearly all the older interpreters. It does not describe the preparation once made for building the Temple, by hewing down cedars in the forest of Lebanon, but it compares the scene of ruin in the interior, the destruction of the carved work, &c. to the wide gap made in some stately forest by the blows of the woodman's axe. See the use of the same figure, Jer. xlv. 22.

IT SEEMS, lit. "it is known, makes itself known, appears," &c.



- 6 And now the carved work thereof altogether  
With hatchet and hammers they break down.
- 7 They have set Thy sanctuary on fire,  
They have profaned the dwelling-place of Thy name  
(even) unto the earth,
- 8 They have said in their heart: "Let us make havoc of  
them altogether."  
They have burnt up all the houses of God in the  
land.
- 9 Our signs we see not; there is no Prophet any more,  
Neither is there with us any who knoweth how long.
- 10 How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach?  
And shall the enemy despise Thy name for ever?

Or possibly, "he, *i.e.* the enemy, makes himself known as one who lifts up," &c.

7. THEY HAVE SET ON FIRE, lit. "They have cast into the fire." Hupfeld compares the German, "in Brand legen, stecken," and the French, "mettre à feu."

THEY HAVE PROFANED . . . UNTO THE EARTH, *i.e.* "by casting it to the earth," as the expression is filled up in the E.V., but in the P.B.V. the English idiom is made to adapt itself to the Hebrew, and this I have followed.

8. ALL THE HOUSES OF GOD IN THE LAND, lit. "all the assemblies," which must here mean "places of assembly," as in ver. 4 and Lam. ii. 6. The work of devastation does not stop short with the Temple. The plain meaning of the word is, that there were many other places for religious worship in the land besides the Temple, and that these, as well as the Temple, were destroyed. Our translators would seem, by their rendering "synagogues," to have regarded this as a Maccabean Psalm.

Before the time of the Chaldean invasion, synagogues are not mentioned, but it is scarcely credible

that even before the Exile there were no houses of God, no place for religious worship except the Temple, in Jerusalem. We read in the book of Kings that in Elijah's time, and probably much earlier, there was an altar of Jehovah on Mount Carmel, besides the sacred places consecrated by the Patriarchs and others such as Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal, Shiloh, and the "high places." See 2 Chron. xxxiii. 17.

9. OUR SIGNS, *i.e.* the signs of God's dominion and presence in the midst of us. Taken in connection with what immediately follows, "There is no Prophet," &c., these may mean miraculous signs, in which sense the word frequently occurs. Or it may only denote here religious emblems, which were displaced to make room for the signs of the heathen. See ver. 4.

NO PROPHET. Such a complaint seems most suitable to the time of the Maccabees, when, in fact, the complaint was frequent. See Introduction to the Psalm.

10. Taking up that word, How long? the Psalmist turns with it to God, beseeching Him not to suffer this reproach to be cast upon His Name. Thrice the same appeal is made: see

- 11 Why withdrawest Thou Thy hand, even Thy right hand ?  
 (Pluck it out) from the midst of Thy bosom, consume  
 (them)!
- 12 Surely God is my King of old,  
 Working deliverances in the midst of the earth ;
- 13 THOU didst divide the sea through Thy strength,  
 Thou breakest the heads of the monsters upon the  
 waters.
- 14 THOU didst crush the heads of Leviathan,  
 (That) Thou mightest give him as food to the people  
 inhabiting the wilderness.

verses 18 and 22. This holy jealousy for the honour of God, as bound up with His people's deliverance, is characteristic of the Old Testament. The feeling is strikingly exemplified in the prayers of Moses, Ex. xxxii. 12, 13 ; Num. xiv. 13—16 ; Deut. ix. 28, comp. xxxii. 21.

11. WHY WITHDRAWEST THOU, lit. Why makest Thou to return, *i.e.* into Thy bosom. See Ex. iv. 7, where the full expression occurs : it denotes, of course, a state of inactivity, the hand being enveloped in the ample folds of the Eastern robes.

PLUCK IT OUT. It seems necessary here to supply the ellipse in this way. The construction is a pregnant one, similar to what we have already had in ver. 7. For the absolute use of the verb CONSUME, comp. lix. 13.

12. SURELY, or, "and yet," in spite of this seeming inactivity. The appeal rests, first, on the fact that God has already manifested His power in signal instances on behalf of His people, and next, on the dominion of God as Creator and absolute Ruler of the universe.

MY KING, expressive of the strong personal feeling of the Psalmist. See note on xlv. 4, and comp. Hab. i. 12, where in like manner the Prophet claims his own covenant relation to

God, whilst speaking as the representative of the people. "Art Thou not from everlasting, O Jehovah my God, my Holy One?—we shall not die."

13—15. Special instances of God's wonder-working power in the passage of the Red Sea, in bringing water from the rock, and in the passage of the Jordan.

13. THE MONSTERS. A symbolical description of the Egyptians. Comp. Is. li. 9, and Ezek. xxix. 3, where Pharaoh is called the "monster which is the sea." The E.V. has in all these places "dragon" as the equivalent word. The same Hebrew word, *tannin*, is employed again cxlviii. 7, and also Gen. i. 21 (where it is rendered *whales*), to denote huge sea monsters, lit. creatures *extended, stretched out*, hence serpents, crocodiles, &c. Perhaps the crocodile (as in the next verse *Leviathan*) is meant here as emblematic of Egypt. The head of the monster has been smitten, and the huge unwieldy carcass lies floating on the waters.

The plural HEADS has been supposed to refer to Pharaoh and his princes, but it may be only poetic amplification.

14. LEVIATHAN, *i.e.* the crocodile, as in Job xli. 1. In what sense is this said to be given as food to the people

- 15 THOU didst cleave fountain and brook ;  
 THOU driedst up ever-flowing rivers.  
 16 Thine is the day, Thine also is the night,  
 THOU hast established the light and the sun.  
 17 THOU hast set all the borders of the earth :  
 Thou hast formed summer and winter.  
 18 Remember this, how the enemy hath reproached Jehovah,

inhabiting the wilderness? Bochart, who is followed by Hengstenberg and others, supposes that the allusion is to the Ichthyophagi, who, according to Agatherides, fed on the sea-monsters which were thrown up on their shores. Comp. Herod. ii. 69. Others, again, think that by the people inhabiting the wilderness are meant the Israelites, to whom the Egyptians are said, figuratively, to be given as food, *i.e.* as plunder. But by far the simplest way is to understand the passage as meaning that the corpses of the Egyptians were cast upon the shore, and so became the prey of the wild beast, which are here called a *people* inhabiting the wilderness; as in Prov. xxx. 25, 26, the ants and the conies are called "a people." Comp. also Joel i. 6; Zeph. ii. 14.

15. THOU DIDST CLEAVE FOUNTAIN, &c. Another instance of a pregnant construction: for "Thou didst cleave the rock, whence fountain and brook issued forth." Comp. lxxviii. 15, and Hab. iii. 9. The reference is, no doubt, to Exodus xvii. 6.

EVER-FLOWING RIVERS, literally "streams of constant flow." Here the Jordan is meant, the plural being used, not to denote the several streams by which it is fed, but merely by way of poetic amplification.

16. From the wonders wrought by God on behalf of His people in their history, the Poet rises to the wider

view of His ever-continued, ever displayed power and majesty in the world of nature. The miracle does not lead him to forget God's power and goodness in that which is not miraculous. The one is rather a witness to, and an instance of, the other.

(THE) LIGHT, or rather "luminary." It is the same word which occurs in Gen. i. 14, 16, and is there rendered "lights." The singular is used collectively for the plural, all the heavenly bodies being meant, and of these the sun is named the chief. In the same way we have, as Hupfeld remarks, Judah and Jerusalem, Ephraim and Samaria, and so the Greeks say, *Ἕλληνες τε καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι*, and the like.

17. THE BORDERS OF THE EARTH, *i.e.* not those merely by which the land is divided from the sea (Gen. i. 9, comp. Prov. viii. 29; Job. xxxviii. 8, &c.), but all the boundary lines by which order is preserved, as those of the seasons, those of the nations, Deut. xxxii. 8; Acts xvii. 26, &c.

SUMMER AND WINTER, as before, DAY AND NIGHT, as marking the everlasting order of the world, and perhaps with reference to Gen. viii. 22. This verb is used of the fashioning of man and the animals, Gen. ii. 7, 19 from the dust, and here it is applied to the seasons, as in Is. xlv. 7, to "the light and the darkness," as creatures of God's hand.

18. REMEMBER. The petition re-

- And how a foolish people have despised Thy Name.  
 19 Give not to the wild beast the soul of Thy turtle-dove,  
 Forget not the life of Thine afflicted for ever.  
 20 Look upon the covenant,  
 For the dark places of the land are full of the  
 habitations of violence.  
 21 O let not the oppressed turn back confounded,  
 Let the afflicted and the poor praise Thy Name !  
 22 Arise, O God, plead Thine own cause.  
 Remember how the foolish man reproacheth Thee all  
 the day long.  
 23 Forget not the voice of Thine adversaries,  
 The tumult of them that rise against Thee which  
 goeth up for ever.

curs (comp. ver. 2) with renewed force after the Psalmist has comforted himself with the recollection of God's almighty power, as both ruling the history of Israel, and giving laws to the material universe.

A FOOLISH PEOPLE, *i.e.* the heathen oppressors of Israel, whether Chaldean or Syrian. In ver. 22, again, we have the same word, "the foolish (man)." There the Targum has "a foolish king," which has been supposed to mean Antiochus Epiphanes, though it might of course refer to Nebuchadnezzar.

20. LOOK UPON THE COVENANT. The appeal lies to that, not to anything in the Psalmist himself, or in his people. "This," says Tholuck "is the everlasting refuge of the saints of God, even in the greatest dangers. And even if they have broken it, can the unbelief of men make the truth of God of none effect" ? The covenant is that made first with Abraham, and then renewed with him and with the fathers. Comp. lxxviii. 10.

THE DARK PLACES, *cr.* "darknesses." The word occurs elsewhere

of the darkness of the grave, lxxxviii. 6, cxliii. 3 ; Lam. iii. 6, and hence it may be used here in a figurative sense, merely as expressing, generally, *misery, gloom, &c.*, or as Delitzsch explains (who understands the Psalm of the Chaldean invasion), "Turn where we may, the darkened land is full of abodes of tyranny and oppression." It seems most probable, however, that those spots are meant which were the best fitted for scenes of violence and murder—the haunts of robbers, who there lay in wait for their victims. The banditti would speedily become numerous in a country where law and order were at an end. Comp. x. 8.

21. THE OPPRESSED, *lit.* "the crushed : " TURN BACK, as in vi. 10, or, perhaps, simply "return" (the usual meaning of the verb), *i.e.* from his approach and entreaty to Thee.

22. REMEMBER HOW, &c. : *lit.* "Remember Thy reproach from a foolish (man) all the day." See note on ver. 18.

23. GOETH UP, *i.e.* which ascends to heaven, crying aloud for vengeance.

## PSALM LXXV.

THE Psalm celebrates in prophetic strain the righteous judgement of God. The voice of God Himself from heaven declares His righteousness, announces to the world that He is not, as human impatience has ever been wont to deem, regardless of wrong and suffering, but that He only waits for the moment which to His infinite wisdom seems best, that He may chastise the insolence of evil-doers.

There are no clearly marked historical allusions in the Psalm. It seems however not improbable, as has been conjectured by many commentators, that it may refer to the time of the Assyrian invasion, either as celebrating, or immediately anticipating, the defeat of Sennacherib. Like Ps. xlvii., it bears some resemblance to the prophecies of Isaiah uttered at that time. But there is, as Ewald has observed, a difference in the manner in which the Prophet and the Psalmist treats his subject. The Prophet adds thought to thought and scene to scene; he expands, enlarges upon, diversifies his theme. He sees in this one act of righteous judgement the prelude to many others. He threatens not the Assyrian only, but other nations who lift themselves up. The Poet, on the other hand, seizes upon the one truth, the single thought of God's judgement as manifested in this instance, and strives to present it to others with the same force and vividness with which it has filled his own mind. He too is a Prophet, a Prophet who has heard the words of God (ver. 2, &c.) and seen the vision of the Most High, but a Prophet, as it were, under narrower conditions and for a more limited purpose.

The close resemblance between many of the expressions in this Psalm and parts of the song of Hannah in 1 Sam. ii. is very noticeable.

The Psalm opens with the ascription of praise which God's wonders now and in all past time have called forth. Ver. 1.

It passes then to the prophetic announcement of the truth which has been uttered from heaven and echoed with triumph upon earth, of God's righteous judgement. Ver. 2—8.

Finally, it concludes with a determination to publish the praise of Jehovah for ever, whilst the same prophetic strain of triumph is heard, as in one last echo, repeating itself. Ver. 9, 10

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. (TO THE MELODY) "DESTROY NOT."\*  
A PSALM OF ASAPH, A SONG.]

- 1 WE give thanks to Thee, O God, we give thanks ;  
And that Thy Name is near Thy wonders have told.
- 2 "When the set time is come,

Ver. 1, 2. The connection between these verses is not, at first sight, very obvious. It may, perhaps, be traced as follows. First the Psalmist blends in one the past and the present. God has been, and is now, the object of Israel's praise ; as He has both in the past and in the present displayed His wonders on their behalf. (Hence the use of the perfect tense, lit. "We have given thanks," &c.) Then he abruptly cites the words of God, words whose fulfilment he had just witnessed, or whose approaching fulfilment he saw in the spirit of prophecy ; words that were themselves an exemplification of the truth that God is near, despite the madness of men and the disorders of the world.

I. AND THAT THY NAME IS NEAR. The construction of this member of the verse is doubtful. It may be rendered in two separate clauses : "And Thy Name is near : they (*i.e.* men, or our fathers, as in xlv. 1, lxxviii. 3) have told of Thy wonders." But it is, perhaps, better to connect the two clauses, as our translators have done. Luther and Mendelssohn, and, more recently, Hupfeld and Bunsen, have taken the same view.

THY NAME IS NEAR, not "near in

our mouth," *i.e.* as the great object of praise, but near in presence, near in self-manifestation, near in love and power, near in succour and blessing. So in Deut. iv. 7, "What nation is there that hath God so *near* unto them?" Comp. xlviii. 1, lxxvi. "His Name is known," and see, xxxiv. 18, cxlv. 18.

2. God is abruptly introduced as the speaker, as in xlv. 10. The oracle is thus given as from the mouth of God Himself, to those who may be in doubt or perplexity because their lot is cast in troublous times.

WHEN THE SET TIME IS COME, lit. "When I shall have taken (reached) the set time," *i.e.* the time appointed in the Divine counsels. The thread of time is ever running, as it were, from the spindle, but at the critical moment God's hand arrests it. God is ever the righteous judge, but He executes his sentence, not according to man's impatient expectations, but at the exact instant which He has Himself chosen. The words are an answer to all such misgivings as those in lxxiii. 3, as well as a rebuke to all hasty and over-zealous reformers, who would pull up the tares with the wheat rather than wait for the harvest.

SET TIME. The Hebrew word has

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\* See note on the inscriptions of Ps. l. and Ps. lvii.

- I, even I, will judge uprightly.  
 3 Though the earth and all the inhabitants thereof are melting,  
     I myself have set up the pillars of it. [Selah.]  
 4 I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly,  
     And to the wicked, Lift not up the horn;  
 5 Lift not up your horn on high,  
     Speak not with a stiff neck.  
 6 For not from the East, and not from the West,  
     And not from the wilderness cometh lifting up.

also the signification *assembly, congregation*, which our translators have adopted here, and which is common in the phrase "tabernacle of the *congregation*," &c. Comp. cii. 13 (where the E. V. has correctly "set time" instead of "congregation," as here); Hab. ii. 3, "the appointed time," *i.e.* for the accomplishment of the vision. And so also Dan. viii. 19, xi. 27, 35.

I, EVEN I. The pronoun is emphatic.

3. Such a critical moment is the present. The world itself seems "utterly broken down and clean dissolved" (Is. xxiv. 19, 20), but He who once built it up like a stately palace still stays its pillars with His hand. The natural framework and the moral framework are here identified. To the poet's eye, the world of nature and the world of man are not two, but one. The words of Hannah's song (1 Sam. ii. 8) furnish an exact parallel. "For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah's, and He hath set the world upon them,"—language which, as the context shows, has a moral application.

4. I SAID. Ewald and others suppose the Divine utterance to end with the previous verse. This is possible; for the Poet, speaking as a Prophet, may thus triumph in the revelation

which has just been made, and turn it into a defiance of the proud. At the same time, as there is no indication of any change of speaker, it is better to regard this and the next verse as a continuation of the Divine oracle.

UNTO THE FOOLS, &c., or, "Unto the madmen, Deal not madly,"—the same words as in lxxiii. 3, where see references.

5. WITH A STIFF NECK. Here, again, there is evidently an allusion to the words of Hannah's song, 1 Sam. ii. 3.

6. FOR. The Poet himself speaks, taking up and applying to himself and to others the Divine sentence which he had just been commissioned to deliver. Glory and power come not from any earthly source, though a man should seek it in every quarter of the globe, but only from God, who lifteth up and casteth down according to His own righteous sentence. Again an allusion to 1 Sam. ii. 6.

FROM THE WILDERNESS, *i.e.* the South, the great wilderness lying in that direction. Thus three quarters are mentioned, the North only being omitted. This may be accounted for, supposing the Psalm to refer to Sennacherib, by the fact that the Assyrian army approached from the North;

- 7 No, God is Judge,  
 He putteth down one, and lifteth up another.  
 8 For there is a cup in the hand of Jehovah,  
 And the wine foameth, it is full of mixture ;  
 And He poureth out of the same :  
 Surely the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth  
 Shall drain them out and drink them.  
 9 But as for me, I will declare for ever,  
 I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.  
 10 And all the horns of the wicked will I cut off,  
 (But) the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.

and therefore it would be natural to look in all directions but that, for assistance to repel the invader.

LIFTING UP. The word is evidently an emphatic word in the Psalm; it is the same which occurs in ver. 4 and 5, and again in ver. 7 and ver. 10. I have, therefore, given the same rendering of it throughout. The rendering of the E. V. "promotion," besides losing sight of the manifestly designed repetition of the same word, is peculiarly unfortunate in conveying a wrong idea. "Lifting up," in its Hebrew sense, does not mean "promotion," as we commonly understand it, but deliverance from trouble, safety, victory. The image, in particular, of lifting up the head or the horn (the last, borrowed from wild beasts, such as buffaloes, &c., in which the horn is the symbol of strength), denotes courage, strength, victory over enemies. See iii. 3, xviii. 2, xxvii. 6.

8. The solemn act of judgement. God puts the cup of His wrath to the lips of the wicked, and holds it there till they have drained it to the uttermost. It is the same figure which we have already had in lx. 3. In the Prophets, it occurs frequently :

Is. li. 17—23 (comp. xix. 14) ; Hab. ii. 15, 16 ; Ezek. xxiii. 32, &c. ; Jerem. xxv. 27 ; xlviii. 26 ; xlix. 12 ; and, in the form of a symbolical action, xxv. 15, &c.

FOAMETH, *i.e.* as it is poured into the cup from the wine-jar, as is expressed in the next member of the verse.

MIXTURE, *i.e.* the aromatic herbs, &c., which were put into the wine to make it more intoxicating. See the article WINE in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*.

POURETH OUT, *i.e.* from the wine-jar into the cup.

OF THE SAME, the wine ; the DREGS THEREOF are the dregs of the cup.

9. BUT AS FOR ME—placing himself and the congregation of Israel in opposition to the proud oppressors—I will be the everlasting herald of this great and memorable act.

10. Triumphantly in this last verse he claims, for himself and for the Church, a share in the signal act of deliverance. That which God threatens (ver. 4, 5), He accomplishes by the hand of His servants. Every horn of worldly power must fall before Him. Comp. Rev. ii. 26, 27.



## PSALM LXXVI.

THIS is one of several Psalms which, as has been remarked in the Introduction to Psalm xlv., were composed in celebration of the miraculous overthrow of Sennacherib's army. From the days of Israel's first occupation of the land, when God went forth with their hosts, giving the victory by signs and wonders from heaven, no deliverance so signal had been witnessed. Hence it roused in an extraordinary degree the religious fervour of the nation, and called forth loud songs of thanksgiving. Like Psalms xlv.—xlviii., this is an ode of victory over the Assyrians. It tells of Zion's glory and Zion's safety (to which there may be an allusion in the name *Salem*), because God has chosen it for His dwelling-place. It tells of the discomfiture of that proud army, whose might was weakness itself when arrayed against the might of Jehovah. It tells how the warriors sank into their last sleep before the walls of the city, not beaten down before a human enemy, not slain by any earthly arm, but at the rebuke of the God of Jacob. And then the Poet looks beyond the immediate scene. He beholds in this great deliverance, not the power only, but the righteousness of God. It is God's solemn act of judgement. It is His voice speaking from heaven and filling the earth. And the lesson which this act of judgement teaches is, the folly of man who would measure his impotent wrath against the Majesty of God; and the wisdom of submission to Him who is the only worthy object of fear.

The Psalm consists of four strophes, each of which is comprised in three verses.

I. The first celebrates Jerusalem and Zion as the abode of God, and the place where He has manifested His power. Ver. 1—3.

II. The second describes in a forcible and animated manner the sudden destruction of the beleaguering army. Ver. 4—6.

III. The third dwells on that event as a solemn, far-reaching act of judgement, conveying its lesson to the world. Ver. 7—9.

IV. The last tells what that lesson is, counselling submission to Him whose power and whose righteousness have so wonderfully made themselves known. Ver. 10—12.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR, WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF ASAPH.\* A SONG.]

- 1 IN Judah is God known,  
His name is great in Israel.
- 2 In Salem also hath been His tabernacle,  
And His dwelling-place in Zion.

1—3. The whole emphasis of this first strophe consists in the prominence given to the particular locality where God has manifested His power. It is on the same field where He has so often gotten to Himself glory. It is in Judah, in Salem, in Zion. It is *there* (ver. 3, the word is peculiarly emphatic:) that He hath dashed in pieces the might of the foe.

I. IS KNOWN, or perhaps more exactly, “maketh Himself known,” as in xlviii. 3, *i.e.* by the present deliverance which He has wrought.

IN ISRAEL. According to Hupfeld, Israel is here mentioned in the parallelism merely for the sake of the poetry, although Judah only is meant. He accounts for such usage by saying that “Judah and Israel” was a common phrase to denote the whole nation. But if the date assigned to the Psalm be correct, there may be a special reason for the mention of Israel. Hezekiah was the first monarch who made any attempt to restore the ancient unity of the tribes. After the fall of Samaria, and the deportation of the inhabitants of the northern kingdom by Esarhaddon, Israel, *i.e.* the ten tribes, had no longer a national

existence. And yet we read that Hezekiah, on his accession, after purifying the Temple, and restoring the worship of God, “sent to all *Israel and Judah*, and wrote letters also to *Ephraim and Manassah*, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the pass-over unto the Lord God of *Israel*.” (2 Chron. xxx. 1.) A study of the whole chapter will show what importance was attached to this union of Israel with Judah, at the time, and will explain, as it seems to me, the mention of both together in the Psalm.

2. SALEM. The LXX. render *ἐν εἰρήνῃ*, and the Vulg. *in pace*: but the word is evidently a proper name. “It seems to be agreed on all hands,” says Mr. Grove, “that Salem is here employed for Jerusalem; but whether as a mere abbreviation, to suit some exigency of the poetry, and point the allusion to the *peace* which the city enjoyed through the protection of God, or whether, after a well-known habit of poets, it is an antique name preferred to the more modern and familiar one, is a question not yet decided.”

HIS TABERNACLE, lit. “booth,” as

\* See inscription, Ps. 1.

3 There brake He the arrows of the bow,  
Shield, and sword, and battle. [Selah.]

4 Glorious art Thou, (and) excellent  
From the mountains of prey.

made of *interwoven* or interlacing boughs of trees, &c. (So the feast of *tabernacles* is the feast of *booths*, or huts.) The name may have been used of any temporary structure, and so of the Tabernacle, and then, as here, of the Temple. Comp. xxvii. 5, and Lam. ii. 6.

But I am inclined to prefer another meaning here, and one more in accordance with the context. The word may signify a dense thicket, the lair of wild beasts. (It occurs in this sense in x. 9, "like a lion in his *lair*.") In ver. 4 it is said, "Thou art glorious from the mountains of *prey*." May not God be here likened to a lion couching in his *lair*, and going forth from those mountains to destroy? This seems almost certain, when we find that the word in the parallel, "His dwelling," is also used in civ. 22 of the *den* of lions; "the lions roaring after their *prey*, &c. . . . lay them down in their *dens*." The same word occurs in the same sense in Am. iii. 4. Then we should render: "In Salem is His covert, and His lair in Zion." Dean Stanley, I find, takes the same view, *Sinai and Pal.* p. 177, note 2. As regards the figure itself, Jehovah is said in two other passages to *roar* (as a lion), Joel iii. 16. He is here, as it were, identified with "the lion of the tribe of Judah."

3. THERE. Emphatically pointing to the spot where the great deliverance had been accomplished. Comp. for the general sense of the verse xlv. 9:—

"Who stilleth wars to the end of the earth,

Who breaketh the bow and cutteth  
the spear in sunder,  
And burneth the chariots in the  
fire."

ARROWS OF THE BOW, lit. "fiery gleams, or lightnings of the bow," the arrows being so called, from their rapid flight, and their glittering in the air; or possibly with an allusion to the burning arrows employed in ancient warfare.

4. There is no comparison, as in the E. V., "*more glorious than the mountains of prey*," though the Hebrew would admit of such a rendering, and it has been adopted by many commentators. They suppose that the Assyrian power is tacitly compared either to a lion going forth to ravin (comp. the fuller picture in Nah. ii. 11—13), or to robbers issuing from their strongholds in the mountains. And thus the power of God is said to be "more excellent" than the power of Assyria, whether regarded as that of a lion, or as that of armed banditti. But such a comparison is flat and tame, and the rendering given in the text is far preferable. See note on ver. 2. God goes forth victoriously from Zion to crush His foes.

"The promise," Tholuck says, "is fulfilled:—

"I will break the Assyrian in my  
land,  
And upon my mountains tread him  
under foot." (Is. xiv. 25.)

Yea, upon the mountains of Jerusalem they themselves must become a prey, who had hoped there to gather the prey." The plural, MOUNTAINS, either used in the wider sense, as in

- 5 The stout-hearted have been spoiled,  
 They have sunk into their sleep,  
 And none of the men of valour have found their hands.
- 6 At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,  
 Both chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.
- 7 Thou, even Thou, art to be feared,  
 And who can stand before Thee when once Thou art  
 angry?
- 8 From heaven didst Thou cause judgement to be heard,

the passage just quoted from Isaiah, or possibly of Zion only, as in lxxxvii. 1, cxxxiii. 3. The great prominence always given to the *mountains* of their native land, both by Psalmists and Prophets, is a further confirmation of the view that the mountains of Palestine, not those of Assyria, are here meant. See Mr. Grove's admirable article, PALESTINE, § 26, Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*.

5. THEY HAVE SUNK INTO THEIR SLEEP. (Comp. 2 Kings xix. 35.) The verb (which is of a different root from the noun "sleep") expresses the languor and lassitude by which a man is overpowered, and so falls asleep. In all other passages where it occurs, the E. V. renders it by *slumber*. See, for instance, cxxi. 3, 4; Is. v. 27, &c., and comp. Nah. iii. 18, "Thy shepherds *slumber*, O King of Assyria," where the word is used, as here, of the sleep of death. A third word is employed in the next verse.

HAVE FOUND THEIR HANDS finely expresses the helplessness and bewilderment of those proud warriors who but a short while before had raised their hands in scornful defiance against Jerusalem (see Is. x. 32). The idiom is apparently similar to our common expression "*losing heart*." (Comp. 2 Sam. vii. 27, to "*find heart*.")

6. ARE CAST INTO A DEAD SLEEP. In the Heb. this is but one word (a participle), denoting present condition. It is used of a profound slumber, either (1) natural, or (2) supernatural, the sleep into which God casts men. Comp. Jud. iv. 21; Dan. x. 9, and the noun from the same root, Gen. ii. 21; 1 Sam. xxvi. 12.

CHARIOT AND HORSE, *i.e.* of course the riders in chariots and on horses.

Byron's animated lines on the destruction of Sennacherib, which may have been partly suggested by this Psalm, will occur to every reader:—

"And there lay the steed with his  
 nostril all wide,  
 But through it there rolled not the  
 breath of his pride:  
 And the foam of his gasping lay white  
 on the turf,  
 And cold as the spray of the rock-  
 beating surf.  
 And there lay the rider distorted and  
 pale,  
 With the dew on his brow, and the  
 rust on his mail."

7. WHEN ONCE THOU ART ANGRY, lit. "from the time of Thine anger."

8. As in the last Psalm, God is spoken of as the Judge (this is a peculiar feature in the Psalms ascribed to Asaph); and, as in that, He speaks

- The earth feared and was still ;  
 9 When God arose to judgement,  
 To save all the afflicted of the earth. [Selah.]
- 10 For the wrath of man must praise Thee,  
 With the remainder of wrath Thou girdest Thyself.  
 11 Vow and pay unto Jehovah your God ;  
 Let all that are round about Him bring presents unto  
 Him who ought to be feared !  
 12 He cutteth off the spirit of princes :  
 He is to be feared by the kings of the earth.

from heaven, terrifying His enemies with the thunder of His word. Comp. lxxv. 2, 3, 7, 8. The train of thought in the two Psalms has certainly sufficient in common to justify us in assigning both to the same period.

10. WITH THE REMAINDER OF WRATH, &c. The meaning is not very clear. Whose wrath is here meant? that of man, or that of God? Some understand the latter, and explain the verse thus: All the wrath of men, every attempt that they make to defeat the will of God, does but turn to their own discomfiture, and His glory; and after all their efforts, He has a store, a residue, of wrath to pour out upon them as punishment. But the objection to this is, that in the previous clause the wrath spoken of is that of man: and it is better to retain the same subject in both clauses. Then we have:—

(a) Man's wrath doth but praise God.

(b) With the remainder of man's wrath, his last impotent efforts to assert his own power, God girds Himself, puts it on, so to speak, as an ornament—clothes Himself therewith to His own glory.

Thus the parallelism of the two clauses is strictly preserved.

The word WRATH is in the plural,

denoting either wrath of every kind, or wrath in its intensity.

11. This is the end. God has wrought His terrible act of judgement—but the first of a long series of judgements to be executed on the nations, unless by timely submission they acknowledge Him as their king. See the similar exhortation in ii. 11.

VOW AND PAY. See on xxii. 25.

BRING PRESENTS, comp. lxxviii. 29.

ALL THAT ARE ROUND ABOUT, *i.e.* the heathen nations, who are to bring presents in token of homage, as in lxxviii. 30.

UNTO HIM WHO OUGHT TO BE FEARED, lit. “to the Fear,” *i.e.* the proper object of fear. See the same use of the word in Is. viii. 12. In like manner God is called “the Fear of Isaac” in Gen. xxxi. 42, 53 (though there the word is different).

12. This verse, or at least the first clause of it, reminds us of the last verse of the preceding Psalm, which closes in a similar strain.

HE CUTTETH OFF, like a vine-dresser, who prunes away the rank boughs, or cuts off the ripe clusters of the vine. Comp. Is. xviii. 5, where the same image is employed by the Prophet at the same time, Jud. viii. 2, xx. 45; Jer. vi. 9, li. 33; Joel iii. 13; Rev. xiv. 15.

## PSALM LXXVII.

THIS Psalm is the record, first, of a sorrow long and painfully questioning with itself, full of doubts and fears, trying in vain to find in itself, or in the past, a light for the present ; and then of the triumph over that sorrow by the recollection of God's love and power, as manifested in the early history of Israel. By whom the Psalm was written, or to what period of the history it is to be referred, it is now impossible to say. The manner in which, towards the close, the passage of the Red Sea is dwelt upon, has led many to conclude that it was written by one of the exiles during the Babylonish captivity. Those two memorable events, the deliverance from Babylon and the deliverance from Egypt, were always associated in the minds of the Jews, the one being regarded, in fact, as the pledge of the other. This, however, in itself, is not decisive. At any time of great national depression, the thoughts of the true-hearted in Israel would naturally revert to God's first great act of redeeming love : and other Psalms (the 78th, the 80th, the 81st), evidently not written during the Exile, look back to the Exodus, and the wonders of God's Hand displayed then, and in the journey through the wilderness. Besides, an inference of a positive kind, in favour of an earlier date, has been drawn from the relation of this Psalm to the prophecy of Habakkuk. Delitzsch, in his Commentary on the Prophet, has traced carefully the coincidences in thought and expression between Hab. iii. 10—15, and verses 16—20 of the Psalm. Among the various arguments by which he endeavours to establish the priority of the Psalm, two seem to be of weight : first, that the Prophet throughout his ode is in the habit of quoting from the Psalms ; and secondly, that with his eye on the future, he arrays all the images of terror and magnificence which are suggested by the past, in order to describe with more imposing pomp the approaching advent of Jehovah ; whereas the Psalmist is not looking to the future, but dwelling on the past : hence it is far more probable that the Prophet imitates the Psalmist, than that the Psalmist borrows from

the Prophet. Supposing this to be satisfactorily established, we might reasonably infer that this Psalm was not written later than the reign of Josiah. But on the other hand, as Hupfeld has pointed out, the mode of expression in Habakkuk, as compared with that here employed, would lead us to an exactly opposite conclusion. (1) The figure in Hab. iii. 10, "The *mountains* saw Thee, they were afraid (lit. in pangs or throes)," is more natural and correct than the use of the same figure as applied in the Psalm to the *waters* (ver. 16). (2) The phrase, "the overflowing of the waters," in Hab. iii. 10, is more simple and natural than the corresponding phrase in ver. 17 of the Psalm. Hence it is most likely that the latter was a designed alteration in copying from the former. (3) That the lightning should be termed the "arrows" of God in Habakkuk is quite in keeping with the martial character and figures of the whole passage. In the Psalm, on the other hand, the figure seems more out of place.

But whenever, and by whomsoever, the Psalm may have been written, it clearly is individual, not national. It utterly destroys all the beauty, all the tenderness and depth of feeling in the opening portion, if we suppose that the people are introduced speaking in the first person. The allusions to the national history may indeed show that the season was a season of national distress, and that the sweet singer was himself bowed down by the burden of the time, and oppressed by woes which he had no power to alleviate; but it is his own sorrow, not the sorrow of others, under which he sighs, and of which he has left the pathetic record.

The Psalm falls naturally into two principal parts: the first, verses 1—9, containing the expressions of the Psalmist's sorrow and disquietude; the second, verses 10—20, telling how he rose above them.

Of these, again, the former half consists of strophes of three verses, 1—3, 4—6, 7—9, the end of the first and third being marked by the *Selah*. The latter may also be divided into three strophes, the first two only being of three verses each, 10—12, 13—15 (the second having the *Selah*), and the last consisting of five, 16—20.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. AFTER THE MANNER OF JEDUTHUN.\* A  
PSALM OF ASAPH.]

- 1 WITH my voice unto God let me cry,  
With my voice unto God, and may He give ear unto  
me.
- 2 In the day of my distress have I sought the Lord ;  
My hand in the night hath been stretched out and  
failed not,  
My soul refused to be comforted.
- 3 I would remember God, and must sigh,  
I would commune (with myself), and my spirit is  
overwhelmed. [Selah.]

1. AND MAY HE GIVE EAR, or more literally, in the form of an address to God, "And do Thou give ear." The constant interchange of tenses in the first six verses lends vividness to the expression of the Psalmist's feelings. And thus are marked the fluctuating emotions of the mind, ever passing from the mere statement of fact to the utterance of feelings and desires.

2, 3. These verses show both the reality and earnestness of the prayer, and the strong faith of the Psalmist. It is no occasional petition hastily put up, but a struggle, like that of Jacob, through the livelong night. It is even a sorer conflict, for he has not found the blessing as Jacob did. He cannot be comforted. He would think of God, but even that thought brings him no strength; he looks within, and his sorrow deepens.

2. HATH BEEN STRETCHED OUT, lit. "poured out" like water, 2 Sam. xiv. 14: or as the eye is said to be poured out or dissolved in tears, Lam. iii. 49; here apparently applied to the hand stretched out in prayer. "The stretched-out, weak, and powerless hand," says Hengstenberg, "conveys the picture of a relaxation

of the whole body." Or, there may be a confusion of metaphor, that being said of the hand which could only properly be said of the eye (hence the Targum substitutes the latter for the former). The Rabbinical writers understood *my hand* to mean *the hand*, or blow, *laid upon me*, and hence came the singular rendering of the E. V. *my sore ran*, &c.

AND FAILED NOT (or it may be rendered as an adverbial clause, *without intermission*), lit. "and grew not cold," like a corpse; "became not weary," used, like the last verb, of tears. Comp. Lam. ii. 18, "Let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself *no rest*;" and iii. 49, "Mine eye trickled down (the word rendered above *has been stretched out*), and ceaseth not, without any *intermission*." The words *rest* and *intermission* are derivatives from the verb here employed, and are applied to tears, perhaps as *frozen* at their source.

HATH REFUSED. Comp. Gen. xxxvii. 35, where the same is said of Jacob when he received the tidings of Joseph's death.

3. MUST SIGH. See Rom. viii. 26

\* See note on inscription of Ps. xxxix.



- 4 Thou hast held mine eyes waking ;  
     I am (so) troubled that I cannot speak.  
 5 I have considered the days of old,  
     The years of ages (past) ;  
 6 I would call to remembrance my song in the night,  
     I would commune with my heart,—and my spirit  
         hath made diligent search :  
 7 “Will the Lord cast off for ever ?  
     And will He be favourable no more ?  
 8 Hath His loving-kindness come to an end for ever  
     Hath (His) promise failed to all generations ?  
 9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious ?  
     Hath He shut up in anger His tender mercies ?”  
     [Selah.]
- 10 Then I said : This is my sorrow,  
     That the right hand of the Highest hath changed.

(συναγαμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις). “St. Paul teaches us that it is the Holy Ghost who in such sighs makes intercession for believers with God.”—THOLUCK.

4. I CANNOT SPEAK. Silence and thought succeed to the uttered prayer. But the heart still prays on in secret, though the mouth is silent.

MY SONG, properly, a song sung to a stringed instrument, as the harp. He would console himself with the recollection of a happier past. Such recollections, as Tholuck remarks, may hush the storm of the soul, may give a man courage to say to himself, Thou art His, He cannot forsake thee. But such recollections may also be made the very instruments of Satan's temptations, when the soul asks, Why is it not always thus? and so falls into the sad and desponding thoughts which follow in the next verses.

IN THE NIGHT. This repeated mention of the night (see ver. 2) shows that he was one who loved the stillness and the solitude of night for

meditation and prayer. (Comp. xvi. 7, xvii. 3.)

8. God's loving-kindness and God's promise (or, *word*, as in lxviii. 11, and Hab. iii. 9) are the two props of his faith.

9. IN ANGER HIS TENDER MERCIES. The words are evidently placed with design in juxtaposition, in order to heighten the contrast. Comp. Hab. iii. 2, “In wrath remember mercy,” where there is the same juxtaposition in the Hebrew.

10. All this that I have been asking myself, and saddening myself with asking, seems impossible, and yet it is this very change which perplexes me.

MY SORROW, or perhaps “my sickness,” *i.e.*, as Calvin explains, a disease which is only for a time, and to which, therefore, I should patiently submit. Comp. Jer. x. 19. Others, “my infirmity,” *i.e.* the weakness of my own spirit, which leads me to take this gloomy view, and which I must resist.

- 11 (But) I will celebrate the deeds of Jah,  
 For I will call to mind Thy wonders of old ;  
 12 And I will meditate on all Thy work,  
 And commune with myself of Thy doings.  
 13 O God, Thy way is holy !  
 Who is a great God as (our) God ?  
 14 Thou, even Thou, art the God that doest wonders,  
 Thou hast made known Thy strength among the  
 peoples.  
 15 Thou hast with (Thine) arm redeemed Thy people,  
 The sons of Jacob and Joseph. [Selah.]

THAT THE RIGHT HAND, &c., lit. "the changing of the right hand." This fact, that it is no more with him as in days past, it is which fills him with grief. And then in the next verse he recovers himself, and passes from self-contemplation to record God's wonders for His people. But another rendering is possible. The word *changing* may mean *years*: "The years of the right hand," &c., and the whole verse might be understood thus :—

"Then I thought : This is my sadness,—

The years of the right hand of  
 the Most High."

*i.e.* the very recollection of those years, and of God's help vouchsafed in times past, does but increase my present gloom.

11. With this verse the change of feeling begins. Hitherto he has looked too much within, has sought too much to read the mystery of God's dealings by the light of his own experience merely. Hence the despondency, when he contrasts the gloomy present with the far brighter and happier past. He cannot believe that God has indeed forgotten to be gracious, that He has indeed changed His very nature ; but that he may be

re-assured and satisfied on this point his eye must take a wider range than that of his own narrow experience. There lies before him the great history of his people. There recurs especially the one great deliverance never to be forgotten, the type and the pledge of all deliverances, whether of the nation, or of the individual. On this he lays hold, by this he sustains his sinking faith.

THY WONDERS. The word is in the singular here, and also in ver. 14. So also in the next verse THY WORK, because the one great wonder, the one great work in which all others were included, is before his thoughts. Comp. Hab. iii. 2, "Revive Thy work."

13. IS HOLY, lit. "is in holiness," not as others, "in the sanctuary;" for the Psalmist, though speaking generally of God's redeeming love and power, is evidently thinking chiefly of the deliverance from Egypt, on which he afterwards dwells. In this and the next verse there is an allusion to Exod. xv. 11, "Who is like unto Thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

15. THOU HAST REDEEMED, a word especially applied to the deliver-

- 16 The waters saw Thee, O God, the waters saw Thee, they  
were troubled ;  
Yea, the depths also trembled ;  
17 The clouds poured out water ; the skies thundered :  
Yea, Thine arrows went abroad ;  
18 The voice of Thy thunders rolled along,  
The lightnings gave shine unto the world :  
The earth trembled and shook.

ance from Egyptian bondage. See note on lxxiv. 2. "The word 'Redemption,' which has now a sense far holier and higher," says Dean Stanley, "first entered into the circle of religious ideas at the time when God 'redeemed His people from the house of bondage.'"—*Jewish Church*, Lect. V. p. 127.

JOSEPH, mentioned here apparently as the father of Ephraim (comp. lxxviii. 67), and so as representing the kingdom of Israel (as lxxx. 1, lxxxi. 5 ; perhaps this special mention of Joseph may indicate that the Psalmist himself belonged to the northern kingdom.

16—20. There follows now a description of the manner in which the redemption (ver. 15) was accomplished in the passage of the Red Sea. In verses 17 and 18, the rain, the thunder and lightning, and the earthquake, are features of the scene not mentioned in the history in Exodus, though Tholuck sees an allusion to a storm in Exod. xiv. 24. Both Philo (*V. M.* i. 32) and Josephus (*Ant.* ii. 16, § 3) add this circumstance in their narratives of the event. "The Passage, as thus described," says Dean Stanley, "was effected, not in the calmness and clearness of daylight, but in the depth of midnight, amidst the roar of the hurricane, which caused the sea to go back—amidst a darkness lit up only by the broad glare of the

lightning, as 'the Lord looked out' from the thick darkness of the cloud." He then quotes these verses of the Psalm. (*Jewish Church*, pp. 127-8.) This is one of those instances in which we obtain valuable incidental additions, by means of the Psalmists and Prophets, to the earlier narratives. See Mr. Grove's Article on OREB, in Smith's *Dict. of the B. b'l.*

16. SAW THEE. Comp. cxiv. 3, where both the Red Sea and the Jordan are mentioned, a passage which Hupfeld thinks is the original from which both this and Hab. iii. 10 are copied.

WERE TROUBLED, lit. "were in pain," as of travail. The same expression is used of the mountains in Hab. iii. 10 : "The mountains saw Thee, they were in pain ;" where the verb seems more aptly to describe the throes of the earthquake, by which the mountains are shaken.

17. The way is made by means of tempest and hurricane.

POURED OUT. Comp. Hab. iii. 10, "the overflowing of the waters." (E.V.) In the same way the lightning is spoken of as "the arrows" of God, in Hab. iii. 11.

18. ROLLED ALONG, lit. "was in the rolling," with allusion to God's chariot ; or perhaps "in the whirlwind."

GAVE SHINE. I have adopted here the Prayer-Book Version of the

- 19 Thy way was in the sea,  
 And Thy paths in (the) mighty waters,  
 And Thy footsteps were not known.  
 20 Thou leddest Thy people like sheep  
 By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

same words in xcvi. 4 (its rendering in this place is less correct), in preference to that of the E. V., "*the lightnings lightened*," (1) because the verb and the noun are from entirely different roots; (2) because the idiomatic "*gave shine*" is an exact equivalent of the Hebrew.

19. THY FOOTSTEPS WERE NOT KNOWN. "We know not, they knew not, by what precise means the deliverance was wrought: we know not by what precise track through the gulf the passage was effected. We know not, and we need not know; the obscurity, the mystery here, as elsewhere, was part of the lesson. . . . All that we see distinctly is, that through this dark and terrible night, with the enemy pressing close behind, and the driving sea on either side, He led His people like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron." —STANLEY, *Jewish Church*, p. 128.

20. This verse stands in beautiful and touching contrast with the last. In that we have portrayed the majesty, the power, the unsearchable mystery of God's ways; in this, His tender and loving care for His people, as that of a shepherd for His flock. See for a like contrast, Is. li. 15, 16, xl. 10—12, lvii. 15.

So ends the Psalm. Nor can I see in such a close that abruptness which has led some commentators to suppose that the Psalm was never finished. The one great example is given, and that is enough. All is included in that; and the troubled, desponding spirit has found peace and rest in the view of God's redemption. "He loses himself, as it were, in the joyful recollection" (De Wette). So may every sorrowful spirit now find peace and rest in looking, not to itself, not even to God's dealings with itself, but to the cross of Christ.

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### PSALM LXXVIII.\*

IN this, the longest of the historical Psalms, the history of Israel is briefly recapitulated, from the time of the Exodus to the final union

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\* On this Psalm see Isaac Taylor, *Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry*, p. 154.

of the tribes under David, and the establishment of the kingdom in his family. This appeal to the past is made evidently with a purpose. The Psalmist comes forward as a prophet to rebuke the sin, the ingratitude, the rebellion of his people. This he does by showing them the present in the light of the past. God had wrought wonders in behalf of their fathers of old ; God had redeemed them from Egypt, led them through the wilderness, brought them to His holy mountain. But the history of their nation had been at once a history of wonders, and a history of rebellions. Miracle had followed on miracle to win them ; chastisement had succeeded to chastisement to deter them ; but the miracle was forgotten, the chastisement produced but a temporary reformation. They had ever been "a faithless and stubborn generation." It is evident, from his opening words, that the Psalmist was anxious to bring out sharply and clearly the lessons with which the past teemed. He saw that his people were in danger of forgetting those lessons. He saw in that history, instruction, warning, reproof for the age in which he lived.

It is, however, remarkable that another and more special purpose appears in the Psalm. If the whole nation is rebuked, the rebuke falls heaviest upon Ephraim. Ephraim is singled out as the leader in the earlier apostasy of the people, as the very type of a faithless and recreant spirit (ver. 12). The rejection of Ephraim and the choice of Judah are dwelt upon at the close in a tone of satisfaction and triumph, as the fulfilment of the purpose of God. It is scarcely possible, therefore, to resist the conclusion, that the Psalm was written after the defection of the Ten Tribes, and that it was designed either to curb the pride of the northern kingdom, or to address a warning to Judah, based on the example of Ephraim.

Various conjectures have been hazarded as to the time when the Psalm was written, which we have not space to discuss here.

The Psalm itself furnishes us with the following data for a conclusion.

(1) It is clear from the concluding verses that it was written after David was established on the throne ; from ver. 69 it might even be inferred after the Temple had been built. (2) The manner in which these events are spoken of leads naturally to the inference that they were of no very recent occurrence ; men do not so speak of events within their own memory. (3) The sharp contrast between Ephraim and Judah, the rejection of Shiloh and the choice of Zion, are an

indication, not of a smouldering animosity, but of an open and long-existing separation.

But at this point two hypotheses become possible.

(a) On the one hand, the Psalmist's object may have been, by holding up the example of Ephraim, to warn Judah against a like falling away, not from the house of David, but from the God of their fathers. In this case we must suppose that a particular prominence is given to the conduct of Ephraim, in the past history, though the whole nation was guilty, in order to prepare the way for what is said of Ephraim's subsequent rejection (see note on ver. 9). Such a warning might be compared to that of Jeremiah at the time of the Chaldean invasion (chap. vii.).

(b) On the other hand, the Psalmist's design may have been not so much to warn Judah as to rebuke Ephraim. Hence it is, that whilst speaking of the past history of *all* Israel he mentions only Ephraim by name. Though all the burden of guilt in that mournful past did not rest exclusively upon them, yet it is with them only that he is concerned. Hence it is, too, that he dwells with so much pride and satisfaction on the transference of the sanctuary from Shiloh to Zion. That haughty tribe, strong in numbers and in power, might boast that it had recovered its ancient ascendancy. Ten out of the twelve tribes might be lost to David's house. But God's presence and favour were not with the ten, but with the two. His sanctuary was not in Shiloh, but in Zion. He had chosen to be the ruler of his people, no scion of the thousands of Ephraim, but the shepherd-stripling of the tribe of Judah.

On the whole, I confess that the tone of triumph with which the Psalm concludes seems to me to favour the last hypothesis, though I fear I must also add that I am unsupported in this view by other commentators.

[A MASCHIL OF ASAPH.\*]

I GIVE ear, O my people, to my law,  
Incline your ear to the words of my mouth.

1—4. The Introduction, announcing the Psalmist's purpose. He will recall the past, that it may act as a warning for the present, and that

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\* See note on Ps. I.

- 2 I would open my mouth in a parable,  
 I would utter dark sayings of old.  
 3 (The things) which we have heard and known,  
 And our fathers have told us,  
 4 We will not hide from their children ;  
 Telling to the generation to come the praise of  
 Jehovah,  
 And His might and His wonderful works that He  
 hath done.  
 5 For He established a testimony in Jacob,  
 And appointed a law in Israel,

the wholesome lessons which it teaches may be perpetuated in the future. In the following four verses he declares that such commemoration of God's wonders is the very destiny of Israel. For this end did He give them His Law, and the lively oracles of His mouth.

1. MY PEOPLE. This does not imply that God or the Messiah is the speaker. The Prophet, speaking in the name and by the authority of God, as His inspired messenger, thus addresses the nation. The opening of the Psalm is similar to that of Ps. xlix. See also Deut. xxxii. 1 ; Is. i. 2.

MY LAW, here evidently used in its wider sense of *instruction* generally, as often in the Book of Proverbs. It is the teaching of a Prophet (Matt. xiii. 35), and in that sense a law, a law of life to those who hear it.

2. I WOULD OPEN. The form of the tense expresses the wish, resolve, &c. The sentence is very similar to that in xlix. 4. The two words PARABLE and DARK SAYINGS are the same which occur in that passage, where see note.

How are we to understand the quotation made by St. Matthew of this passage, who sees a fulfilment of it in the parables spoken by our Lord

(Matt. xiii. 34, 35)? It cannot be supposed for a moment that these words were a prediction of our Lord's mode of teaching, or that He Himself is here the speaker. But here, as elsewhere, that which the Old Testament Prophet says of himself, finds its fittest expression, its highest realization, in the Great Prophet of the kingdom of Heaven. "Citatur hic locus a Matthæo, et *accommodatur* ad Christi personam. . . . In hac igitur, parte quum similis Prophetæ fuerit, quia de sublimibus mysteriis concionatus est in altiore dicendi forma, apposite tran-feritur ad ejus personam quod Prophetæ de se affirmat."—*Calvin*. St. Matthew's quotation runs, *ὅπως πληρωθῇ μὲν τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος, Ἄνοιξεν ἐν παραβολαῖς τὸ στόμα μου, ἐρεῦξομαι κεκρυμμένα ὅπρὸ καταβολῆς (κόσμου.)* The LXX. have in the latter clause : *φθέγγομαι προβλήματα ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.*

4. WE WILL NOT HIDE. Comp. Job. xv. 18, where it used in like manner of the faithful transmission of truths received. All truth known is a sacred trust, given to us, not for ourselves alone, but that we may hand on the torch to others.

5. The very object with which God gave HIS LAW and HIS TESTIMONY (see on these words, note on xix. 7)

- Which He commanded our fathers  
 To make known unto their children ;  
 6 In order that the generation to come might know (them),  
 (Even) the children which should be born,  
 (Who) should rise up, and tell (them) to their  
 children ;  
 7 That they might place their confidence in God.  
 And not forget the doings of God,  
 But keep His commandments ;  
 8 And not be as their fathers,  
 A stubborn and rebellious generation,  
 A generation that was not steadfast in heart,  
 And whose spirit was not faithful towards God,  
 9 The children of Ephraim, being equipped as archers,

was, that they might be preserved, not in writing only, but by oral communication and transmission, that they might be a living power in the people. See the commands in Ex. x. 2, xii. 26, 27, xiii. 8—10, 14, 15 ; Deut. iv. 9, vi. 20, &c.

8. THAT WAS NOT STEADFAST IN HEART, lit. "that did not establish its heart," was ever wavering in its allegiance.

9. THE CHILDREN OF EPHRAIM. An example of that "stubborn and perverse generation" mentioned ver. 8. But why are the "children of Ephraim" mentioned, and what particular sin of theirs is here alluded to ? (1) We must not be led astray by the expression "equipped as archers," &c. to look for some defeats of the tribe in battle, for it is not a *chastisement*, but a *sin* which is spoken of. Hence the description of their carrying bows and turning back must be a figure employed in the same sense as that of "deceitful bow," ver. 57. (2) The allusion cannot be to the separation of Ephraim and the other tribes from Judah, because it is the earlier history of the nation in the

wilderness which is here before the Poet's eyes. (3) Nothing is gained by introducing the particle of comparison as in the P.V.B., "*like as* the children of Eph." &c., for such a comparison rests upon nothing. (4) Nor can "the children of Ephraim" here stand merely for the whole nation, as has sometimes been maintained by referring to lxxx. 2 and lxxxi. 5, for in ver. 67 the distinction between Ephraim and Judah is marked. (5) It would seem, then, that *their* treacherous conduct is here specially stigmatized, in order, as it were, to sound the note of that rejection on which the Psalmist afterwards dwells, ver. 67. Ephraim had been, after the settlement in Caanan, the most numerous and the most powerful of the tribes. Shiloh, the religious capital of the nation, and Shechem, the gathering place of the tribes (Josh. xxiv. 1 ; Jud. ix. 2 ; 1 Kings xii. 1), were both within its borders. During the time of the Judges it seems to have asserted a kind of supremacy over the rest. Possibly the Psalmist is thinking of this. Having their rejection in view, he



- Turned back in the day of battle.  
 10 They kept not the covenant of God,  
 And refused to walk in His Law;  
 11 And they forgot His doings,  
 And His wonderful works which He had shown them.  
 12 In the sight of their fathers He did wonders,  
 In the land of Egypt, (in) the field of Zoan.

remembers their ancient position, and regards them as leaders of the people, and morally, leaders in their sin. It is true this could only apply to their history in the land of Canaan. During the wanderings in the wilderness, with which a large part of the Psalm is occupied, the tribe of Ephraim, so far from holding a leading position, was the smallest of all, except Simeon. It may be, however, that the Psalmist forgets or neglects this circumstance, and only thinks of the tribe as the rival of Judah in later times, and the leader in the revolt. But see the remarks in the Introduction to the Psalm.

EQUIPPED AS ARCHERS. This and the next clause are designed apparently to express, in a figure, the faithlessness of the Ephraimites. They are like archers who, fully equipped for war, at the critical moment when they should use their weapons, afraid to meet the shock of battle, wheel round and fly in disorder.

TURNED BACK. Comp. Judg. xx. 39, 41. Panic-struck, when they were expected to be of service; hardly pretending flight, like the Thracian archers, in order to take the enemy at greater advantage. In any case, the image is one of faithlessness. The next verse is an explanation of the figure.

The following paraphrase is given in the *Catena Aurea* (from Aug.

Cassiod. and the Glossa Ord.): "The children of Ephraim taking aim and shooting with the bow,—that is, promising to keep the law,—and openly saying, All that the Lord hath said unto us we will do and hear, turned back in the day of battle, when they said unto Aaron, Make us gods to worship. They failed in the day of battle,—that is, in the day of temptation; for the prophet Hosea saith: Ephraim is as a silly dove that hath no heart. For it is not hearing, but temptation, that puts to the proof the promise of obedience."

12. ZOAN. Its Greek name was Tanis. It lay "near the eastern border of Lower Egypt . . . on the east bank of the canal which was formerly the Tanitic branch" (of the Nile). "Zoan is mentioned in connection with the plagues in such a manner as to leave no doubt that it is the city spoken of in the narrative in Exodus, as that where Pharaoh dwelt. The wonders were wrought 'in the field of Zoan,' which may either denote the territory immediately round the city, or its nome, or even a kingdom. This would accord best with the shepherd-period." See the article ZOAN, in the *Dict. of the Bible*, by Mr. R. S. Poole.

It is remarkable that after beginning in this verse to speak of the wonders *in Egypt*, the Psalmist drops all mention of them till ver. 43 (which

- 13 He clave (the) sea, and caused them to pass through,  
And made (the) waters to stand as an heap.  
14 And He led them with the cloud in the day-time,  
And all the night (through) with a light of fire.  
15 He clave rocks in the wilderness,  
And gave them drink as (from the) great deep.  
16 He brought forth streams also out of (the) cliff,  
And caused waters to run down like the rivers.  
17 Yet they went on to sin yet more against Him,  
(And) to provoke the Most High in the desert.  
18 And they tempted God in their heart,  
To ask food for their lust ;  
19 Yea, they spake against God, they said,

is a resumption of this verse), and turns aside to dwell on the wonders *in the wilderness* (see Introduction).

13. Now follows the exemplification, in certain detailed instances, of the faithlessness, and disobedience, and forgetfulness of their fathers in the wilderness. First, in ver. 13—16, some of God's wonders wrought on their behalf are mentioned, and then, ver. 17—20, the thankless and perverse spirit in which these wonders were regarded.

AS AN HEAP ; borrowed from Ex. xv. 8. See note on xxxiii. 7.

15. ROCKS. The word *tsur* shows that the Psalmist is thinking in this verse of the miracle at Horeb, recorded in Exod. xvii. (See note on ver. 16.)

AS (FROM THE) GREAT DEEP, lit. "and gave them, as it were, the great deep to drink" (or, "as (from) the depths in abundance"). De Wette calls this a "gigantic" comparison. But "the deep" here may mean, perhaps, not the sea, but the great subterranean reservoir of waters from which all fountains and streams were supposed to be supplied, as Deut. viii. 7. Comp. xlii. 7.

16. The word here used (*Sela*) "is especially applied to the cliff at Kadesh, from which Moses brought water, as *Tsur* is for that struck in Ex. xvii." — STANLEY, *Sinai and Palestine*, App. § 29.

17. YET THEY WENT ON TO SIN. In the verses immediately preceding no special instance of transgression is recorded, though such is implied in the mention of the miracle of the water, when they murmured against God. Hence the murmuring for flesh is described as a *further and fresh* instance of sin. Hupfeld thinks it may be only a phrase borrowed from the Book of Judges, where it is commonly prefixed to each fresh act of disobedience (as in iii. 12, &c.); but there the formula is quite in place, as it follows the narration of previous transgressions.

18. THEY TEMPTED GOD, *i.e.* demanded, in their unbelief, signs and wonders, to put His power to the proof, instead of waiting in faith and prayer for its exercise (repeated ver. 41, 56, as a kind of refrain, see also cvi. 14). The original is Ex. xvii. 3, 7, where also the name Massah, "tempting," is given to the spot.

- “ Can God prepare a table in the wilderness ?  
 20 Lo, He smote (the) rock, that waters gushed out,  
 And torrents rushed along :  
 Can He give bread also ?  
 Or can He provide flesh for His people ? ”
- 21 Therefore, (when) Jehovah heard (that), He was wroth,  
 And a fire was kindled in Jacob,  
 And anger also went up against Israel ;  
 22 Because they believed not in God,  
 And put not their trust in His salvation.  
 23 Then He commanded the clouds above,  
 And opened the doors of heaven :  
 24 And He rained upon them manna to eat,  
 And gave them the corn of heaven ;  
 25 Bread of the mighty did they eat every one.

19, 20. The words here put into the mouth of the people are only a poetical representation of what they said, not differing materially from the historical narrative, Ex. xvi. 3, &c., xvii. 2, 3, 7 ; Num. xi. 4, &c., xx. 3, &c.

19. PREPARE A TABLE, lit. “ set out in order,” the same phrase as in xliii. 5.

20. WATERS GUSHED OUT occurs also cv. 41 ; Is. xlviii. 21.

FLESH : the word is a poetical one. “ Bread and flesh ” are used in the same way of the manna and the quails in Ex. xvi.

21—29. The awful punishment of their sin. He gives the bread which they ask (ver. 21—25), and then the flesh (ver. 26—29), but His granting of their desire is in itself the most terrible of chastisements. The representation is freely borrowed from the two accounts in Ex. xvi. ; Numb. xi. ; more particularly the last.

21 A FIRE, with allusion to the “ fire of Jehovah ” in Numb. xi. 1, whence the name of the place was

called Tab’erah, “ burning ”), where also occurs the similar expression, “ And when Jehovah heard (it), His anger was kindled.”

ALSO. This does not mark that the fire of God’s wrath was added to the natural fire ; for the last was but the expression of the first. But the particle belongs, logically, to the verb WENT UP, and denotes the retributive character of this fiery scourge.

22. HIS SALVATION, as already shown in the deliverance from Egypt.

24. RAINED. Hence the expression in the preceding verse, “ opened the doors,” &c., as in Gen. vii. 11 ; 2 Kings vii. 2 ; Mal. iii. 10. In the same way the manna is said to be “ rained ” from heaven in Ex. xvi. 4. (Every expression used shows plainly that it was a miraculous gift, and not a product of nature.) Hence, too, it is called CORN OF HEAVEN, for which we have “ bread of heaven ” in cv. 40 ; Ex. xvi. 4 ; John vi. 31. So again—

25. BREAD OF THE MIGHTY (see

- He sent them meat to the full.  
 26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven,  
 And by His power He guided the south wind,  
 27 And He rained flesh upon them as the dust,  
 And winged fowls like as the sand of the seas;  
 28 And He let it fall in the midst of their camp,  
 Round about their habitations.  
 29 So they did eat and were well filled,  
 Seeing that He gave them their own desire.

the marginal rendering of the A. V.) probably means "Angels' bread," not as if angels were nourished by it, or as if it were food worthy of angels, but as coming from heaven, where angels dwell. The word MIGHTY is nowhere else used of the angels, though they are said in ciil. 20 to be "mighty in strength." Hence many would render here "bread of nobles or princes" (such is the use of this word in Job xxiv. 22, xxxiv. 20), *i.e.* the finest, the most delicate bread.

26. CAUSED TO BLOW, lit. "made to journey, or go forth."

GUIDED (like a flock). The two verbs occur below, ver. 52, where they are used of God's conduct of His people. The usage here is borrowed from the Pentateuch, where both verbs are said of the wind, the first in Numb. xi. 31, the second in Exod. x. 13. The winds are thus conceived of as God's flock, which He leads forth and directs at His pleasure.

EAST WIND . . . SOUTH WIND. These may be mentioned poetically, without being intended to describe exactly the quarter from which the quails came. In Numb. xi. 31, it is merely said that "there went forth a wind from Jehovah, and brought quails from *the sea*," which Hupfeld too hastily asserts must be the Red

Sea (*i.e.* as he evidently means, the Gulf of Suez); and that consequently the quails must have been brought by a west wind. But Kibroth-hattaavah was probably not far from the western edge of the Gulf of Akabah. And the quails at the time of this event were, as Mr. Houghton has remarked (see QUAILS, in *Dict. of the Bible*), on their spring journey of migration *northwards*. "The flight which fed the multitude at Kibroth-hattaavah might have started from Southern Egypt, and crossed the Red Sea near Ras Mohammed, and so up the Gulf of Akabah into Arabia Petraea." In this case, the wind blowing from the south first, and then from the east, would bring the quails.

27. RAINED FLESH: as before "rained manna," from Exod. xvi. 4, 8, 13.

28. LET IT FALL. The word aptly describes the settling of these birds, unfitted for a long flight, and wearied by their passage across the gulf. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* x. 33, says that quails settle on the sails of ships by night, so as to sink sometimes the ships in the neighbouring seas. The verse follows Exod. xvi. 13; Numb. xi. 31.

29. WERE WELL FILLED, *i.e.* even to loathing, as follows, ver. 30 (see Numb. xi. 18-20). So in ver. 25, "to the full," from Exod. xvi. 3, 12.

- 30 They were not estranged from their desire ;—  
 Whilst their food was yet in their mouths,  
 31 The anger of God went up against them,  
 And slew the fattest of them,  
 And smote down the young men of Israel.  
 32 For all this, they sinned yet more,  
 And believed not His wondrous works,  
 33 Therefore did He make their days vanish in a breath,  
 And their years in terror.
- 34 When He slew them, then they inquired after Him,  
 Yea, they turned again and sought God ;  
 35 And they remembered that God was their Rock,  
 And the Most High God their Redeemer.

THEIR DESIRE, the satisfaction of their fleshly appetite. The word (*taavah*) no doubt alludes to Kibroth-hattaavah, "the graves of desire, or fleshly appetite." Numb. xi. 4, 34.

30. THEY WERE NOT ESTRANGED, or, as it might be rendered, "(Whilst) they were not (yet) estranged," *i.e.* whilst they still found satisfaction and enjoyment in this kind of food, whilst it was yet in their mouths, the anger of God went up, &c. The passage is manifestly borrowed from Numb. xi. 33, "And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against the people, and Jehovah smote the people with a very great plague;" and so closely borrowed as to be evidence that this portion of the Pentateuch already existed in writing. But, unfortunately, we cannot draw hence any argument for the age of the whole Pentateuch in its present form.

31. WENT UP. See above, ver. 21, and xviii. 8.

THE FATTEST: it may mean either the strongest, or the noblest. Comp.

xxii. 29. On these and the young men, the flower of the people, the judgement especially falls.

32. The allusion seems to be to Numb. xiv. 11, "How long will it be ere they believe Me, for all the signs which I have showed among them?" the words of God to Moses after the return of the spies. And this is the more likely, because the next verse alludes to that cutting short of the life of the people, which was the consequence of their rebellion at that time. (Numb. xiv. 28—34.)

33. IN A BREATH. See xxxix. 5, 6, and the complaint of Moses, xc. 9, though the word there used is different.

34. The passage that follows, to the end of ver. 39, is a most striking and affecting picture of man's heart, and God's gracious forbearance, in all ages:—man's sin calling for chastisement, the chastisement producing only temporary amendment, God's goodness forgotten, and yet God's great love never wearied, and God's infinite compassion ever moved afresh by man's weakness and misery.

- 36 But they did but flatter Him with their mouth,  
 And they lied unto Him with their tongue ;  
 37 And their heart was not steadfast with Him,  
 Neither were they faithful in His covenant.  
 38 But He, in His tender mercy, covereth iniquity, and  
 destroyeth not ;  
 And many a time turned He His anger away,  
 And stirred not up all His fury.  
 39 And He remembered that they were (but) flesh,  
 A wind that goeth and cometh not again.
- 40 How often did they provoke Him in the wilderness,  
 Did they grieve Him in the desert :

36. DID BUT FLATTER. Comp. Is. xxix. 13, lvii. 11, lix. 13. "This returning to God, at least so far as the majority were concerned, was not from any love of righteousness, but only from the fear of punishment."—*Lyra*.

37. THEIR HEART WAS NOT STEADFAST, &c. This is the ever-repeated complaint ; see ver. 8, 22. There is no permanence, no stability in the reformation which has been produced. Comp. Hos. vi. 4.

38. The verbs in the first clause are present, and should be so rendered. It destroys the whole beauty of the passage to render, "But he *was* so merciful," &c., as if the reference were only to a particular occasion. God's mercy is like Himself, everlasting, and ever the same.

BUT HE. The words are emphatic, and the allusion is to Ex. xxxiv. 6 ; Numb. xiv. 18, 20.

39. Comp. Gen. vi. 3, viii. 21 ; Job vii. 7, 9, x. 21 ; Ps. ciii. 14—16 ; and for the word "goeth," or "passeth away," of the wind, Hos. vi. 4, xiii. 3.

40. After thus celebrating God's tender compassion, in striking contrast with the perpetual rebellion and ingratitude of the people, the Psalmist resumes the sad tale afresh. But instead of mentioning other instances of rebellion in the wilderness (ver. 40) he passes from that topic to dwell on the wonders wrought in Egypt, the lively recollection of which ought to have kept the people from these repeated provocations. Thus he takes up again the thread dropped at ver. 12.

The second principal portion of the Psalm begins with this verse. It is occupied, first, with the narrative of the plagues in Egypt, the Exodus, and Israel's entrance into the Promised Land, ver. 40—55. It then touches briefly on the history under the Judges, the Philistine invasion in the time of Eli, which was God's chastisement for transgression, the disaster at Shiloh, whereby Ephraim was robbed of his ancient honours, and which led to the choice of Zion, the ascendancy of the tribe of Judah, and the union of the kingdom under David, ver. 56—72.

- 41 Yea, again and again they tempted God,  
 And dishonoured the Holy One of Israel.  
 42 They remembered not His hand,  
 Nor the day when He redeemed them from the  
 adversary.  
 43 How He had set His signs in Egypt,  
 And His wonders in the field of Zoan,  
 44 And turned their rivers into blood,  
 So that they could not drink of their streams.  
 45 He sent among them flies which devoured them,  
 And frogs which destroyed them.  
 46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar,  
 (And) their labour unto the locust.  
 47 He smote their vines with hail,

43. In the enumeration of the plagues, the Psalmist does not follow the order of the history, except as regards the first and the last, and omits all mention of the third (the lice), the fifth (murrain of cattle), the sixth (boils and blains on man and beast), and the ninth (darkness).

44. The first plague. Comp. Ex. vii. 17, &c.

45. The fourth plague (Ex. viii. 20. &c.), and the second plague (Ex. viii. 1, &c.).

FLIES. The rendering of the E. V., "*divers sorts of flies*," comes from a wrong derivation of the word from a root signifying to *mix*.

46. CATERPILLER, or possibly the word means some particular species of locust, or the locust in its larva state. (See *Dict. of the Bible*, III. App. xxxix.) This word is not used in the Pentateuch, but in Joel i. 4 it is joined with the locust, as here.

47, 48. The seventh plague, that of the hail mingled with fire (Ex. ix. 13), with its effects, both on the produce of the land and on the cattle. As belonging to the former, vines

and sycomores are here mentioned, as vines and fig-trees in cv. 33. De Wette and Hupfeld assert that the writer, as a native of Canaan, ascribes too much prominence to the vine, the cultivation of which was but little attended to in Egypt, and which is not said in the Pentateuch to have suffered. But this is an unfounded assertion. Mr. R. S. Poole, in his learned article on EGYPT, in the *Dict. of the Bible*, says: "Vines were extensively cultivated, and there were several different kinds of wine, one of which, the Marcotic, was famous among the Romans." (Vol. i. p. 497.) Pharaoh's chief butler dreams of the vine, Gen. xl. 9—11; and the vines of Egypt, as well as the figs and pomegranates, are thought of with regret by the Israelites in the wilderness (Num. xx. 5). The mural paintings at Thebes, at Beni-Hassan, and in the Pyramids, contain representations of vineyards. Boys are seen frightening away the birds from the ripe clusters, men gather them and deposit them in baskets, and carry them to the wine-press, &c.

- And their sycomore-trees with frost :  
 48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail,  
 And their flocks to hot thunderbolts.  
 49 He let loose upon them the burning of His anger,  
 Wrath and indignation and distress,  
 Letting loose evil angels (among them).  
 50 He made a free path for His anger ;  
 He spared not their soul from death,  
 But gave their life over to the pestilence ;  
 51 And smote all the first-born in Egypt,  
 The firstlings of (their) strength in the tents of Ham.  
 52 But He made His own people to go forth like sheep,  
 And guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

47. FROST, or, as this is unknown in Egypt, perhaps, rather, "huge hailstones," but the word occurs nowhere else, and its meaning is uncertain.

48. HOTTHUNDERBOLTS, or "lightnings;" the same word as in lxxvi. 3, "*lightnings* of the bow," where see note, the allusion being to the fire which ran along the ground, Ex. ix. 23. Comp. cv. 32.

49. This verse expresses generally the whole work of devastation wrought by the Divine ministers of evil in the land of Egypt, and so strikingly introduces the final act of judgement, the destruction of the first-born, which follows in ver. 50, 51.

LETTING LOOSE, lit. "a letting loose of," &c., this being a noun, in apposition with the preceding nouns, and further, describing the action of the verb, "He let loose." The Poet lifts the veil and shows us the wrath of God as the source, and angels as the ministers of the destruction.

EVIL ANGELS. Others render, "angels, or messengers (the word may mean either, as *ἄγγελος*, in Greek) of evil," i.e. who work evil.

So Hengstenberg and Delitzsch, who adopt the view of Ode, in his work *De Angelis*, that God makes use of good angels to punish bad men, and of evil angels to buffet and chasten good men. But this cannot be maintained : see I Sam xvi. 14 ; I Kings xxii. 21, &c. However, whichever rendering is preferred, it comes to the same thing, for "evil angels" would not mean here what was commonly understood by evil spirits, but angels sent upon an evil mission—a mission of destruction. There can be no doubt of this, because the expression must have been suggested by "the destroyer" in Ex. xii. 13, 23.

50. MADE A FREE PATH, lit. "levelled a path," as Prov. iv. 26, v. 6.

51. FIRSTLINGS OF (THEIR) STRENGTH, lit. "beginning of strengths," the plural being used poetically for the singular which is found in the same phrase, Gen. xlix. 3 ; Deut. xxi. 17.

TENTS OF HAM. So "land of Ham," in cv. 23, 27, cvi. 22. Comp. Gen. x. 6.

52. See on ver. 26, and comp. lxxvii. 20.



- 53 And He led them safely so that they did not fear ;  
 And as for their enemies, the sea covered (them).  
 54 And He brought them to His holy border ;  
 To yon mountain which His right hand had purchased.  
 55 He drove out also the nations before them,  
 And allotted them as an inheritance by line,  
 And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.  
 56 But they tempted and provoked the Most High God,  
 And kept not His testimonies ;  
 57 But turned back and dealt faithlessly, like their fathers :  
 They were turned aside like a deceitful bow ;  
 58 And they angered Him with their high places,  
 And moved Him to jealousy with their graven  
 images.  
 59 When God heard (this), He was wroth,  
 And greatly abhorred Israel ;  
 60 So that He rejected the tabernacle in Shiloh,

54. YON MOUNTAIN, *i.e.* Zion, the building of the Temple there being represented, as in lxviii. 16, as the great crowning act to which all else pointed ; unless the noun is used here collectively = "these mountains," *i.e.* this mountain-land of Palestine, as in Ex. xv. 17, "the mountain of Thine inheritance." Comp. Is. xi. 9. This last, it may be said, is favoured by the parallelism.

55. AND ALLOTTED THEM, *lit.* "made them fall," in allusion to the *throwing* of the lot. The pronoun "them" is used somewhat incorrectly (the nations having been just spoken of as driven out), instead of "their land." Comp. Josh. xxiii. 4, "See, I have allotted (*made to fall*) unto you these nations," &c. ; Numb. xxxiv. 2, "the land which *falleth* to you as an inheritance."

BY LINE. See note on xvi. 6.

56—58. The renewed disobedience of the nation, after their settlement

in the land, during the time of the Judges.

56. TEMPTED AND PROVOKED, repeated from ver. 17, 18, and 41 ; here the special act of provocation being the worship of idols in the high places. Comp. Judg. ii. 11, &c.

57. A DECEITFUL BOW, *i.e.* one which disappoints the archer, by not sending the arrow straight to the mark (not "a *slack* bow," as some would explain, referring to Prov. x. 4, "a slack hand").

60. The Tabernacle was at Shiloh during the whole period of the Judges (Josh. xviii. 10 ; Judg. xviii. 31 ; 1 Sam. iv. 3). God rejected and forsook it when the Ark was given into the hands of the Philistines, 1 Sam. iv. The Ark was never brought back thither, and the Tabernacle itself was removed first to Nob (1 Sam. xxi.), and subsequently to Gibeon (1 Kings iii. 4). Jeremiah, when warning the nation against the

- The tent which He pitched among men.  
 61 And He gave His strength into captivity,  
     And His beauty into the adversary's hand.  
 62 Yea, He gave over His people to the sword,  
     And was wroth with His inheritance.  
 63 Their young men the fire devoured,  
     And their maidens were not praised in the marriage-  
         song.  
 64 Their priests fell by the sword,  
     And their widows made no lamentation.  
 65 Then the Lord awaked, as one out of sleep,  
     Like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine;  
 66 And He smote His adversaries backward,  
     He put them to a perpetual reproach.  
 67 And He abhorred the tent of Joseph,  
     And chose not the tribe of Ephraim;  
 68 But chose the tribe of Judah,

superstitious notion that the Temple would be a defence, reminds them how God had forsaken and rejected the place of the first Tabernacle: "For go now to my place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name to dwell at the first, and see what I have done to it, because of the wickedness of My people Israel." (Jer. vii. 12. See also ver. 14, and chap. xxvi. 6.) These passages do not, perhaps, necessarily imply a destruction of Shiloh by enemies,—certainly nothing of the kind meets us in the history,—but a desolation which followed on the removal of the sanctuary. Calvin observes: "The mode of expression is very emphatic: that God was so offended with the sins of His people, that He was forced to forsake the one place in the whole world which He had chosen."

PITCHED, lit. "caused to dwell." Comp. Josh. xviii. 1, xxii. 19.

61. HIS STRENGTH . . . HIS

BEAUTY. The Ark is so called because there God manifested His power and glory. Comp. 1 Sam. iv. 3, 21, and Ps. cxxxii. 8.

63, 64. The utter desolation of the land strikingly pictured by its *silence*. Neither the joyous strains of the marriage-song nor the sad wail of the funeral chant fall upon the ear. It was a land of silence, a land of the dead. Comp. Jer. xxii. 18; Ezek. xxiv. 23; Job xxvii. 15. There is, perhaps, an allusion in ver. 64 to the death of Hophni and Phinehas.

65, 66. God punishes and then delivers. The reference is to the long series of victories over the Philistines, under Samuel, Saul, and David.

65. AS ONE OUT OF SLEEP, lit. "as a sleeper." Comp. vii. 6, xlv. 23.

LIKE A MIGHTY MAN: comp. Is. xlii. 13.

68. THE TRIBE OF JUDAH,

- The mount Zion which He loved.  
 69 And He built His sanctuary like high places,  
     Like the earth which He hath founded for ever.  
 70 He chose David also, His servant,  
     And took him from the sheep-folds ;  
 71 As he was following the ewes giving suck, He brought  
     him  
     To feed Jacob His people,  
     And Israel His inheritance.  
 72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart,  
     And led them with the skilfulness of his hands.

though the sanctuary was planted, not "in Judah only, or in Benjamin only, but on the confines of both (comp. Josh. xv. 63 with Judg. i. 21); so that whilst the altars and the holy place were to stand within the borders of the one tribe, the courts of the Temple were to extend into the borders of the other tribe, and thus the two were to be riveted together, as it were by a cramp, bound by a sacred and everlasting bond."—

BLUNT, *Undersigned Coincidences*, &c. p. 181.

69. LIKE HIGH PLACES, &c., or, as we might say, "high as heaven, and sure as the solid earth."

70—72. The faithful shepherd of the flock became the faithful shepherd of the nation; just as the obedient fishermen in the Gospel history became the successful fishers of men.

On the figure here employed, see lxxvii. 20.

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## PSALM LXXIX.

THIS Psalm is a lamentation over the same great national calamity which, as we have already seen, is bewailed in terms so pathetic in the Seventy-fourth. The two Psalms have, indeed, some points of difference as well as of resemblance. The great features in the scene of misery are presented in the two with a different degree of prominence. In the one, the destruction of the Temple occupies the foreground; in the other, the terrible carnage which had made the

streets of Jerusalem run with blood is the chief subject of lamentation. In the former, the hope of deliverance and triumph breaks out strongly in the very midst of the sorrow and the wailing (lxxiv. 12, &c.). In the latter, the tone of sadness prevails throughout, with the exception of the short verse with which the Psalm concludes. There is also a marked difference in style. The Seventy-fourth Psalm is abrupt, and sometimes obscure; the Seventy-ninth, on the contrary, flows smoothly and easily throughout.

But these differences are balanced by resemblances not less observable. Thus, for instance, we may compare lxxix. 5, "how long for ever," with lxxiv. 1, 10; lxxix. 1, the desecration of the Temple, with lxxiv. 3, 7; lxxix. 2, the giving up to the wild beast, with lxxiv. 19; lxxix. 12, the reproach of the God of Israel, with lxxiv. 10, 18, 22; lxxix. 13, the comparison of Israel to a flock, with lxxiv. 1. There is the same deep pathos in both Psalms; in both, the same picturesque force of description; both the one and the other may be called, without exaggeration, the funeral anthem of a nation.

There can, therefore, be little doubt that both Psalms, even if not written by the same poet, yet bewail the same calamity. It is equally certain that there are but two periods of the national history to which the language of either could properly apply. But in attempting to draw our inference from this Psalm, the same difficulties meet us which have already met us in our attempts to determine the date of Psalm lxxiv. Does the Psalm deplore the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, or is it a dirge over the sack of the city by Antiochus Epiphanes?

As there is no shadow of proof that the Canon was closed before the Maccabean era, we are at liberty to form our opinion as to the probable date of the Psalm purely on internal evidence. There is one expression in the Psalm, and one only, which may seem to favour the Babylonish exile. "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee" (ver. 11). But even this might be used equally well of the captives who were carried away by the army of Antiochus (1 Macc. i. 32).

We now come to difficulties of a more formidable kind. Two passages in the Psalm are found elsewhere; the one in Jeremiah, the other in the First Book of Maccabees.

Verses 6 and 7 stand almost word for word in Jer. x 25. Does the Prophet quote from the Psalmist, or the Psalmist from the Prophet?

In favour of the former supposition it may be said: (1) that it is

Jeremiah's habit to quote largely from other writers, especially from Job and the Psalms; (2) that in his prophecy the verse immediately preceding, the 24th verse of the chapter, is a quotation from the Sixth Psalm; (3) that the words occupy a more natural position in the Psalm than they do in the Prophecy, inasmuch as the *prayer* that God would punish the heathen follows immediately on the *complaint* that His wrath burns like fire against Israel; and also inasmuch as the word "pour out" seems to have been employed designedly with reference to the use of the same verb in ver. 3, "they have poured out" (E. V. "they have shed"); (4) that the difficult singular, ver. 7, is changed in Jeremiah into the plural, and the passage further altered and expanded by the addition, "and they have devoured him and consumed him," which is quite in the style of Jeremiah, who rarely quotes without some alteration of the kind.

The first and the last of these reasons are certainly not without force.

It has not, I believe, been noticed, and yet it appears to me almost certain, that the prayer of Daniel (ix. 16) contains allusions to the language of this Psalm: "for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers (comp. ver. 8 of the Psalm, where, though the word 'forefathers' is different, the thought is the same), Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us" (comp. ver. 4 of the Psalm).

Still the question must remain an open one whether the passage in Jeremiah or that in the Psalm is the original. Unless this question can be positively settled, we have no clue to guide us as to the age of the Psalm. Its language would apply almost equally well either to the time of Nebuchadnezzar or to that of Antiochus Epiphanes, This seems to have been felt by some of the earlier commentators, who, without venturing to bring it down in point of actual composition so low as the latter period, have supposed it to be a prophecy of that calamitous time.

The Psalm can hardly be said to have any regular strophical divisions.

It consists, first, of a complaint (ver. 1—4); and then of a prayer that God would visit His people again in mercy, and pour out His vengeance upon their enemies (ver. 5—12); whilst a closing verse announces the gratitude with which God's mercy will be acknowledged (ver. 13).

[A PSALM OF ASAPH.]

- 1 O GOD, the heathen have come into Thine inheritance ;  
They have defiled Thy holy temple ;  
They have made Jerusalem a heap of stones.
- 2 They have given the dead bodies of Thy servants  
To be meat unto the fowls of the heaven,  
The flesh of Thy beloved unto the beasts of the  
earth.

1—4. Lament over the terrible calamities which have befallen the nation.

1. HEATHEN. This word I have elsewhere translated “nations,” but the enemies of Jerusalem are here so designated not merely as consisting of different nations (though the Chaldean army was thus composed), but as *profane* intruders upon the sacred soil. A religious idea is evidently associated with the use of the word. Hence I have followed the rendering of the E. V.

THINE INHERITANCE, the holy land and the holy people (comp. lxxiv. 2, lxxviii. 62, 71), holy as the abode of God (as Exod. xv. 17), itself a sanctuary. The same idea of profanation, as connected with foreign conquest, occurs frequently in the Prophets (see Joel iii. 17; Nah. i. 15; Is. xxxv. 8, lii. 1; and especially as parallel with this passage, Lam. i. 10).

DEFILED. Although to a pious Jew this defilement would be a thing of not less horror than the destruction of the holy house, still it is remarkable that if the Chaldean invasion be meant, the profanation only, and not the destruction of the Temple (as in lxxiv.), should be lamented.

A HEAP OF STONES, or rather, plur. “heaps of stones,” “ruins.” Thus was the prophecy of Micah

fulfilled, which he uttered in the time of Hezekiah (iii. 12). See also Jer. xxvi. 18, where the prophecy is quoted. In both passages the same word is used, and in the A. V. rendered “heaps.” It occurs also in the sing., Mic. i. 6, “I will make Samaria a *heap* of the field.”

2. That which the Psalmist here laments was threatened by Jeremiah, vii. 33, “And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth,” &c. See also viii. 2; ix. 22; xv. 3; xvi. 4; xix. 7; the original passage being Deut. xxviii. 26.

THY BELOVED, or, “Thy pious ones.” See on xvi. 10. Vaihinger argues that such a designation of the people is a proof that the Psalm cannot belong to the Chaldean invasion; for then the nation was utterly evil and corrupt. But in l. 5, the same title is given to the whole nation as in the covenant with God, at the very time when they are charged with breaking that covenant. So Habakkuk, after complaining of the corruption of his people, and seeing that their sins will bring God’s judgement upon them, still speaks of them as “righteous,” in contrast with the Chaldeans, who are “wicked” (Hab. i. 13). So it may be here; unless, indeed, the Psalmist is thinking rather of “the faithful

- 3 They have shed their blood like water round about Jerusalem ;  
 And there was none to bury (them).  
 4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours,  
 A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.  
 5 How long, O Jehovah ; wilt Thou be angry for ever ?  
 Shall Thy jealousy burn like fire ?  
 6 Pour out Thy fury on the heathen which know Thee not,  
 And upon (the) kingdoms which have not called upon  
 Thy name.

few," "the holy seed," than of the many whose sins had called for chastisement.

3. THEY HAVE SHED. It might be better, though less idiomatic, to render "they have poured out," and so again in ver. 10, "which is poured out." For it is the same word which occurs also in ver. 6, "*Pour out* Thy fury," &c. ; and there may perhaps be a designed antithesis in the repetition of the word. "As they have poured out our blood, so do Thou pour out upon them Thy fury."

NONE TO BURY, this being, according to the deep-rooted feeling of all ancient nations, a great aggravation of the calamity. Comp. Jer. xiv. 16, xxii. 18, 19.

4. With the exception of the first word, this is an exact repetition of xlv. 13, where see note. (That Psalm, as we have seen, may perhaps be of the Maccabean age.) Comp. also lxxx. 6.

NEIGHBOURS. Such as the Edomites, for instance (see cxxxvii. 7, Lam. iv. 21, 22), if the earlier date be preferred.

5—7. God may make use of the heathen as "the rod of His anger," wherewith to chasten His people, but nevertheless, when His purpose is

accomplished, then His wrath is turned against the oppressor. It is in this conviction that the Psalmist prays, ver. 6, "Pour out," &c. The ground of his prayer is not only that they have not called upon God's name, but they have *devoured Jacob*. Hence he asks for a righteous retribution. Precisely in the same spirit Habakkuk long before had said of the Chaldeans : "O Jehovah, for judgement Thou hast ordained them, and, O Thou Rock, for correction Thou hast appointed them" (i. 12) ; and then, after portraying the work of judgement wrought by that "bitter and hasty nation," he tells of "the parable" and "taunting proverb" which shall greet their utter overthrow (ii. 6, &c.). The same law of righteous retribution is frequently recognised by the Prophets. See for instance Is. x. 12, 24—26, and elsewhere.

5. FOR EVER. On this, as joined with the question, see on xiii. -1.

LIKE FIRE. Comp. lxxviii. 21, and the original passage, Deut. xxxii. 22.

6. This verse and the next are repeated with slight variation in Jer. x. 25. As to the question whether the Psalmist borrowed from the Prophet, or the Prophet from the Psalmist, see Introduction.

7 For they have devoured Jacob,  
And laid waste his pasture.

8 Oh remember not against us the iniquities of (our) fore-  
fathers ;

Let Thy tender mercies speedily come to meet us,  
For we are brought very low.

PASTURE. Such is the proper meaning of the word (not *sanctuary*, as the Chald.—but see 2 Sam. xv. 25). Comp. lxxxiii. 12 ; Ex. xv. 13 (where “His holy pasture” may = “His holy border,” lxxviii. 54) ; Jer. xxv. 30. The figure is thus suggested, which is afterwards more fully expressed in ver. 13, where, however, the word rendered “pasture” is a different one in Hebrew. It is a favourite image in all this group of Psalms.

8. AGAINST US, lit. “with respect to us,” *i.e.* so that we should thereby suffer. Daniel ix. 16 combines in some measure the language of this verse and ver. 4. The Prophet confesses that Jerusalem and his people have become “a reproach unto all that are round about,” not only because of their own sins, but for “*the iniquities of their fathers.*” This heritage of sin and its curse is indeed fully recognised in Holy Scripture. God Himself publishes it in the Law (Ex. xx. 5, comp. xxiv. 7). See also Lam. v. 7, and 2 Kings xxiii. 26. Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, and Hupfeld are all at pains to argue that the iniquities of the fathers are not visited upon the children, except when the children themselves are guilty. In proof, they appeal to Deut. xxiv. 16, 2 Kings xiv. 6, Ezek. xviii. 20. But only the last of these passages is in point ; the other two, the latter of which is merely a quotation from the former, only lay down the rule

by which human tribunals are to be bound. Fully to discuss this question in a note would be quite impossible ; it would require a volume. I will only remark, (1) That, as a simple matter of fact, the innocent do suffer for the guilty. Children receive from their parents their moral and physical constitution, and both the taint and the chastisement of sin are transmitted. To this Scripture and experience alike bear witness. (2) That there is a mysterious oneness of being, a kind of perpetual existence, which manifests itself in every family and every nation. Each generation is what all previous generations have been tending to make it. The stream of evil gathers and bears along an ever-increasing mass of corruption ; so that upon the last generation comes the accumulated load of all that went before (Matt. xxiii. 35). But (3) Scripture nowhere teaches that a man is guilty in the sight of God for any sins but his own. Sinning himself, he allows the deeds of his fathers ; he is a partaker of their iniquities ; he helps to swell the fearful catalogue of guilt which at last brings down God’s judgement ; but his condemnation, if he be condemned, is for his own transgression, not for those of his fathers.

COME TO MEET. E.V. “prevent.” God’s mercy must anticipate, come to meet, man’s necessity.

9. Twice the appeal is made “for Thy Name’s sake ;” that revelation of God which he had made of Him-



- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy Name,  
Yea, deliver us, and cover our sins for Thy Name's sake.
- 10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?  
Let there be made known among the heathen in our sight  
The revenging of the blood of Thy servants which is shed.
- 11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee,  
According to the greatness of Thy power spare Thou those that are appointed unto death.
- 12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom  
Their reproach wherewith they have reproached Thee, O Lord.
- 13 So we Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture will give thanks to Thee for ever,  
To all generations we will tell forth Thy praise.

self to Moses, when He passed by and proclaimed the Name of Jehovah. (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.) Comp. Ps. xx. 1, xxiii. 3, xxix. 2.

COVER OUR SINS, and so "forgive" them, as the word is commonly rendered. See xxxii. 1. They have provoked God's wrath, and from that wrath He only can hide them.

10. The first clause of the verse is borrowed nearly word for word from Joel ii. 17, and this, Hengstenberg thinks, rests on Ex. xxxii. 12, Numb. xiv. 15, 16; Deut. ix. 28. It is repeated in cxv. 2.

IN OUR SIGHT, lit. "before our eyes." The expression suggests a feeling of joy and satisfaction in beholding the righteous judgement of God. Comp. lii. 6, and note there.

THE REVENGING OF THE BLOOD, &c. : comp. Deut. xxxii. 43.

11. THE SIGHING OF THE PRISONER AND THOSE THAT ARE APPOINTED UNTO DEATH (Heb. "the sons of death") are expressions found again in cii. 20, a Psalm written, there can be no doubt, during the Exile. By "the prisoner" must be meant, if this Psalm refers to the same time, the whole nation, whose captivity in Babylon, as well as their bondage in Egypt, is regarded as an imprisonment. If, on the other hand, the Psalm is Maccabean, the allusion will be to those who were carried captive by Antiochus Epiphanes.

12. UNTO OUR NEIGHBOURS. Because their scorn was more intolerable, and also more inexcusable, than the oppression of distant enemies. Comp. ver. 4. SEVENFOLD, as in Gen. iv. 15, 24. INTO THEIR BOSOM : comp. Is. lxxv. 7, Jer. xxxii. 18.

## PSALM LXXX.

AS in the case of most of the historical Psalms, so in the case of this, it is impossible to say with certainty at what period it was written. The allusions are never sufficiently definite to lead to any positive conclusion. It is not a little remarkable that even the mention of the tribes in verse 2, so far from being a help, has rather been a hindrance to interpretation. The prayer which recurs so often, ver. 3, 7, 14, 19, would seem to imply that the people were in exile : but it may be a prayer, not for restoration to their land, but only for a restoration to prosperity, the verb "turn us again" being capable of either explanation. All that is certain is, that the time was a time of great disaster, that the nation was trampled down under the foot of foreign invaders. The Poet turns to God with the earnest and repeated prayer for deliverance, and bases his appeal on the past. God had brought a vine out of Egypt and planted it in Canaan. How could He give up that vine to be devastated by the wild beasts ? Will He not appear at the head of the armies of Israel, as once He went before her sons in the desert with a pillar of fire ? Will He not, as of old, lift up the light of His countenance upon them ?

The mention of the three tribes, "Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh," may perhaps denote that this is a Psalm for the northern kingdom. Some have supposed it to have been a prayer of the Ten Tribes in their captivity in Assyria, and it has been conjectured that the Inscription of the LXX., *ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἀσσυρίου*, is to be taken in this sense. Calvin, on the other hand, thinks that it is a prayer *for* the Ten Tribes, by a poet of the southern kingdom.

In the journey through the wilderness the three tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh were ranged side by side, and in the order of march followed immediately behind the Ark (Numb. ii. 17—24). This explains their mention in the Psalm. The prayer of the Psalmist is, that God would again lead His people, again go forth at

the head of their armies as He did of old. Everything favours this interpretation. God is addressed as the Shepherd of Israel who led Joseph "like a flock," with manifest reference to the journeys through the wilderness (see lxxvii. 20). The petition is, that He who "is throned above the Cherubim would shine forth." Here the allusion is to the Ark, and the manifestation of the Divine glory. Then naturally comes the mention of those tribes whose position was directly behind the Ark. Hence the whole prayer may be regarded as a prayer for national restoration, and for the same Divine succour which had been so signally vouchsafed to their fathers in the wilderness.

Still, whilst on this ground I am disposed to believe that the whole nation is the object of the Psalmist's hopes and prayer, I am also inclined to think that the prominence given to Joseph and Benjamin may best be accounted for by supposing that the Psalmist was either a native of the northern kingdom, or that he had some strong sympathy with his brethren in Israel. In the 77th, 78th, and 81st Psalms, we meet with a similar peculiarity in the form of the national designation, and in all it may indicate some special relation on the part of the writer to the kingdom of Israel.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. ACCORDING TO "THE LILIES—A TESTIMONY."\*  
A PSALM OF ASAPH.]

I O THOU Shepherd of Israel, give ear,  
Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock ;  
Thou that sittest (throned above) the Cherubim, shine  
forth.

I. SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL. On the figure as common to this group of Psalms, bearing the name of Asaph, see on lxxvii. 20. There is an allusion to Gen. xlviii. 15, "the God who was my Shepherd" [E.V. "who fed me"], and xlix. 24. In both passages Jacob blesses *Joseph* and his sons. So here it follows: "Thou that leadest *Joseph* like a flock."

(THRONED ABOVE) THE CHERUBIM: as in xcix. I. Comp. xxii. 3, "throned above the praises of Israel," where see note. The expression denotes the dwelling of God in His temple, and the manifestation of His presence there, as is evident from the verb following.

SHINE FORTH, appear in all Thy Glory and Majesty for our help. See

\* See note on Ps. xlv. p. 173.

- 2 Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh,  
 Stir up Thy strength and come to save us.
- 3 O God, do Thou turn us again,  
 And show the light of Thy countenance, that we may  
 be saved.
- 4 O Jehovah, God (of) hosts,  
 How long wilt Thou be angry with Thy people that  
 prayeth?

1. 2, where the same word is used of God's coming forth from His Sanctuary in Zion to execute judgement.

2. TO SAVE US. Heb. "for our salvation."

BEFORE EPHRAIM, &c. The three tribes are mentioned together with reference to the position which they occupied in the march through the wilderness, where they followed in the order of procession immediately behind the Ark. (See Numb. ii. 17—24.) This falls in with the language of the previous verse, "Thou that sittest enthroned *above the Cherubim*, shine forth." It is strange how completely this fact, which is the obvious explanation of the mention of these three tribes together, has been overlooked by nearly all the recent German interpreters. Bear this in mind, and it becomes evident that, whatever the national disaster here deplored, the prayer is that these tribes may be restored to their ancient position, united as of old, and as of old led by God Himself, with the visible symbols of His Presence.

3. TURN US AGAIN, either from the Exile, supposing the Psalm to have been written after the captivity of the Ten Tribes; or in the more general sense of recovery from disaster, as in lx. 1.

SHOW THE LIGHT OF THY COUNTENANCE. Again an allusion to the history of the people in the wilder-

ness, Numb. vi. 25. See on lxvii. 1, iv. 6.

4. GOD (OF) HOSTS, see on lix. 5. On this repetition of the Divine Names Hengstenberg remarks: "In prayer all depends upon God, in the full glory of His being, walking before the soul. It is only into the bosom of such a God that it is worth while to pour out lamentations and prayer. 'Jehovah,' corresponding to the 'Shepherd of Israel,' ver. 1, points to the fulness of the love of God towards His people; and 'God, (God of) hosts,' corresponding to 'throned above the Cherubim,' to His infinite power to help them."

HOW LONG WILT THOU BE ANGRY, &c.; lit. "How long *hast* Thou *smoked*." The preterite after the interrogative in this sense is unusual. But the full form of expression would be, "How long hast Thou been . . . and wilt continue to be . . . angry." Comp. Ex. x. 3, xvi. 28. The use of the verb "to smoke," said of a person, is also without parallel. The usual phrase would be, "will Thine anger smoke." Comp. lxxiv. 1; xviii. 8 (where see note); Deut. xxix. 20. But the figure is bolder here than in the other passages, as it is applied immediately to God *Himself*. God, who is Light and Love, is also "a consuming fire."

WITH THY PEOPLE THAT PRAYETH, lit. "*in* (*i.e.* during) the prayer

- 5 Thou hast fed them with tears as bread,  
And hast made them to drink of tears in great measure.
- 6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours,  
And our enemies mock (us) at their pleasure.
- 7 O God (of) hosts, turn us again,  
And show the light of Thy countenance, that we may be saved.
- 8 Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt,  
Thou didst drive out the heathen, and plant it ;
- 9 Thou madest room before it,  
And when it had taken root, it filled the land :
- 10 The mountains were covered with the shadow of it,  
And the boughs thereof were like the cedars of God.
- 11 She sent out her branches unto the sea,  
And her young shoots unto the river.

of Thy people." That which seems so mysterious, that which calls for the expostulation and the entreaty is, that even whilst they pray, *in spite of* that prayer, God's wrath is hot against them.

6. A STRIFE, *i.e.* not an object of contention amongst themselves, but rather an object which they vied with one another in assailing.

UNTO OUR NEIGHBOURS, not the great powers, such as the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians, but the petty states which bordered on Judæa, who were always ready to exult over every misfortune that befel the Israelites. Comp. lxxix. 12.

AT THEIR PLEASURE, lit. "for themselves," *i.e.* for their own satisfaction.

8. THOU BROUGHTEST OUT, or "transplantedst." Delitzsch quotes from Shemoth Rabba, c. 44. "When cultivators wish to improve a vine, what do they do? They root it up out of its place, and transplant it to another."

A VINE. The same comparison is found in other passages: Is. v. 1—7, xxvii. 2—6; Jer. ii. 21, xii. 10; Ezek. xvii. 5—10. In some of these passages the figure of a vineyard is mixed with that of the vine, and such is partly the case here: see ver. 12. That there is a reference to the blessing of Joseph (see above on ver. 1) can hardly be doubted. Observe especially the word "son," ver. 15 (E. V. "bough"), compared with Gen. xlix. 22, "Joseph is a fruitful son" (E. V. "a fruitful bough").

THOU DIDST DRIVE OUT, &c. Comp. xliv. 2.

9. MADEST ROOM, by destroying the Canaanites, as the soil is prepared for planting, by "gathering out the stones," &c. Comp. Is. v. 2.

10. CEDARS OF GOD. See on xxxvi. 6.

11. SEA . . . RIVER, *i.e.* from Gaza on the Mediterranean to Euphrates. Comp. lxxii. 8. The allusion is to the time of Solomon, of whom it is said, that "he had dominion over

- 12 Why hast Thou broken down her hedges,  
 So that all they which pass by the way do pluck  
 her ?
- 13 The boar out of the wood doth root it up,  
 And the wild beasts of the field devour it.
- 14 O God (of) hosts, turn, we beseech Thee,  
 Look down from heaven, and see,  
 And visit this vine ;
- 15 And protect that which Thy right hand hath planted,  
 And the son whom Thou madest strong for Thyself.
- 16 It is burnt with fire, it is cut down ;  
 They perish at the rebuke of Thy countenance.
- 17 Let Thy hand be over the man of Thy right hand,

all the region on this side the river, from Tiphshah (*i.e.* Thapsacus, on the western bank of the Euphrates) even to Azzah (or Gaza)," 1 Kings iv. 24. Comp. Deut. xi. 24, "Every place which the soles of your feet shall tread upon shall be yours ; from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the west sea shall be your boundaries." See also Gen. xxviii. 14 ; Josh. i. 4.

12. Portions of this verse are repeated in lxxxix. 40, 41. Comp. also Is. v. 5.

13. THE BOAR OUT OF THE WOOD, as in Jer. v. 6, "the lion out of the wood." It has been supposed that some particular enemy is meant, such as the Assyrian monarch or Nebuchadnezzar, but this is negatived by the indefinite expression in the parallel clause, "the wild beasts of the field," or more literally, "that which moveth in the field."

15. THE SON. Ewald and others render "the branch," or "shoot," referring to Gen. xlix. 22, where the word no doubt occurs in this sense (see above on ver. 8), a sense which would be very suitable here with

reference to the figure of the vine. But the expressions in ver. 17, "son of man," "man of Thy right hand," seem rather to indicate that here, too, the figure is dropt. The ambiguous word may, however, have been chosen designedly, the more readily to connect the figure with what follows. THE SON evidently means the nation of Israel, as in Ex. iv. 22 ; Hos. xi. 1.

THOU MADEST STRONG, *i.e.* whom Thou didst carefully rear till it reached maturity. Comp. Is. xlv. 14, where the same word is used of a tree. See also lxxxix. 21, and similar expressions in Is. i. 2, xxiii. 4.

16. IT IS CUT DOWN. The word occurs also in Is. xxxiii. 12, of thorns cut down that they may be burned. In this verse the lamentation over the present condition of the nation is resumed. In the first clause the figure of the vine reappears ; in the second there is an abrupt transition to the nation of whom the vine is the figure.

17. MAN OF THY RIGHT HAND. This has been explained (1) "one whom Thy right hand protects,"

Over the son of man whom Thou madest strong for  
Thyself :

18 So will we not go back from Thee :—

Do Thou quicken us, and we will call upon Thy Name.

19 O Jehovah, God (of) hosts, turn us again,

Show the light of Thy countenance, that we may be  
saved.

one who is the object of Thy special care and love; or (2) "one whom Thou hast won for Thyself by Thy right hand" (in allusion to God's putting forth His power on behalf of Israel); or (3) with reference to ver. 15, one whom God's right hand planted. This last is perhaps best, as thus the two clauses of ver. 17 answer to the two of ver. 15. Israel has been both *planted* and *made strong* by God, and on both grounds asks

God's protecting care. Some see in this title, together with that of "son of man" in the next clause, a designation of the Messiah, who in the same sense is said, in ex. 1, 5, to sit on the right hand of God. But the obvious relation of this verse to ver. 17 rather leads to the conclusion that the nation of Israel, the vine spoken of before, is meant.

18. QUICKEN US, *i.e.* restore us to a *new* life. Comp. lxxi. 20; lxxxv. 6.

## PSALM LXXXI.

THIS Psalm was apparently intended to be sung at one or more of the great national Festivals. There has, however, been much difference of opinion as to the particular Festival or Festivals for which it was originally composed.

The view which is maintained by some of the most eminent critics supposes that the exhortation of the Psalm refers both to the Feast of Trumpets on the first of the month, and to the Feast of Tabernacles, which lasted from the fifteenth to the twenty-first or twenty-second. This would explain the mention both of "the new moon" and of "the full moon," both marking important Festivals, and Festivals occurring in the same month. Both would be kept with loud expressions of joy. The blowing of cornets, and the apparatus of musical instruments, by which the first is to be announced, were

certainly not usual at the Passover, whereas they would be perfectly in keeping with so joyous an occasion as the Feast of Tabernacles. The music in Hezekiah's celebration of the Passover (2 Chron. xxx. 21, &c), to which Hengstenberg refers, was probably exceptional. The peculiar circumstances under which the Feast was then kept, and the great joy which it called forth, would sufficiently account for this mode of celebration, but there is no hint given that musical instruments were ever employed, as the Passover was originally observed; and the general character of the Feast is against such a supposition.\* It is a further evidence that the Feast of Tabernacles is meant, that it is styled so emphatically "our feast." See note on ver. 3.

On the relation of the *two* Festivals which, on this supposition, are combined, more will be found in the note on that verse.

Properly speaking, there are no strophical divisions. The Psalm consists of two parts:—

I. In the first the Psalmist summons his nation to the Festival, bidding them keep it with loud music and song, and every utterance of joy, because it was ordained of God, and instituted under circumstances worthy of everlasting remembrance. Ver. 1—5.

II. In the next he abruptly drops his own words. What those circumstances were, what the meaning of God's revelation then given, the people had forgotten; and it is for him, in his character of Prophet as well as Poet, to declare. It is for him to show how that voice from the past had its lesson also for the present; how every festival was God's witness to Himself; how it repeated afresh, as it were, in clear and audible accents, the great facts of that history, the moral of which was ever old and yet ever new. But the Psalmist conveys this instruction with the more imposing solemnity, when, suddenly breaking off his exhortation, he leaves God Himself to speak.

It is no more the ambassador, it is the Sovereign who appears in the midst of His people, to remind them of past benefits, to claim their obedience on the ground of those benefits, and to promise the utmost bounties of grace, on the condition of obedience, for the future. Ver. 6—16.

There could be no grander conception of the true significance of

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\* Hence Tholuck conjectures that this Psalm was composed for Hezekiah's celebration.



the religious feasts of the nation than this. There are so many memorials of God's love and power, so many monuments set up to testify at once of His goodness, and of Israel's ingratitude and perverseness, so many solemn occasions on which He comes as King and Father to visit them, to rekindle anew their loyalty and their affection, and to scatter amongst them the treasures of His bounty. To give this interpretation to the Festivals, to put in its true light the national joy at their celebration, appears to have been the object of the Psalmist. If so, it is a matter of secondary importance what particular Festival or Festivals were chiefly before his eye.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. UPON THE GITTITH.\* (A PSALM) OF ASAPH.]

- 1 SING joyfully unto God our strength,  
Shout aloud unto the God of Jacob.
- 2 Raise a song, and bring hither the timbrel,  
The pleasant harp with the lute.
- 3 Blow (the) cornet in the new moon,

Ver. 1—5. The Festivals are to be kept with the loudest expressions of joy and thanksgiving, as Israel's special privilege, as instituted by God Himself, and as a great memorial of His redemption.

1. SHOUT ALOUD. There may be an allusion in this verb to the expression in Numb. xxix. 1, where the noun employed is from the same root (rendered in the E.V., "it is a day of *blowing the trumpets*"). On the first day of the seventh month (Tisri) two silver trumpets (at a later period 120, see 2 Chron. v. 12) were to be blown.

2. RAISE A SONG &c. or, "*take musick*" (the noun is used both of the human voice and of instrumental music), "and *strike* the timbrel."

3. THE CORNET, "The *shophar* is especially remarkable as being

the only Hebrew instrument which has been preserved to the present day in the religious services of the Jews. It is still blown, as in time of old, at the Jewish new year's festival, according to the command of Moses (Numb. xxix. 1)." (Engel, *Hist. of Music*, p. 292.) These instruments are commonly made of cows' or rams' horns; they differ somewhat in shape, some being much more curved than others, and the tube of some not being round but flattened. Engel mentions one in the Great Synagogue in London, which has this verse of the Psalm inscribed on it. He also quotes David Levi (*Rites and Ceremonies of the Jews*), as saying that the trumpet is made of a ram's horn, in remembrance of Abraham's sacrifice (Gen. xxii. 12, 13), which, according to the Jewish tradition, was on

\* See note on Ps. viii. p. 37.

- At the full moon, on our (solemn) feast.  
 4 For it is a statute for Israel,  
 An ordinance of the God of Jacob :  
 5 He appointed it as a testimony in Joseph,

the new year's day, "and therefore we make use of a ram's horn, beseeching the Almighty to be propitious to us in remembrance and through the merits of that great event."

IN THE NEW MOON. Strictly speaking, this might be any new moon; for in the beginnings of their months they were to blow with trumpets over their burnt-offerings, &c., Numb. x. 10; but perhaps the new moon of the seventh month, the new year's day, is especially meant. (See Numb. xxix. 1.) And so the Chald. paraphrases, "in the month of Tisri."

AT THE FULL MOON. Such is apparently the meaning of the word here, and of the similar Aramaic form in Prov. vii. 20 (though the E.V. has in both passages "the appointed time"). If, then, the new moon is that of the seventh month, "the full moon" must denote the Feast of Tabernacles, which began on the 15th of the same month. Accordingly there follows—

ON OUR (SOLEMN) FEAST, *i.e.* the Feast of Tabernacles, which was also called pre-eminently "the Feast," 1 Kings viii. 2, 65 (where the E.V. has "*a* feast," wrongly), xii. 32; Ezek. xlv. 25; Neh. viii. 14; 2 Chron. v. 3, vii. 8.

But are we to understand that both Festivals, that at the new moon and that at the full, were to be ushered in with the blowing of cornets? Such seems to be the meaning. Delitzsch thus explains, I think rightly, the reference to the two. Between the Feast of Trumpets on the 1st of Tisri, and the Feast

of Tabernacles, which lasted from the 15th to the 21st or 22nd, lay the Great Day of Atonement on the 10th of the month. This circumstance gave a peculiar significance to the Feast of Tabernacles—made it, in fact, the chief of all the Feasts, inasmuch as it was the expression of the joy of forgiveness and reconciliation declared by the High Priest to the nation on that solemn day. Hence it was kept with more than ordinary rejoicing. And hence the Psalmist would have the gladness of the new moon repeated "at the full moon, on the day of our solemn feast." The first was but a prelude to the last; the one looked forward to the other; and therefore the loud music of the one was to usher in the other also.

4. FOR. The festivals are thus joyfully to be kept because they are of *Divine* appointment, and a special and distinguishing privilege of the nation. The same preposition before "Israel" marks them as the recipients, before "God" denotes that He is the Author and Giver of the law.

5. TESTIMONY, used of a single law, or not, as usually, of the whole body of laws. See note on xix. 7. It was a great *witness* and *memorial* set up of God's power and love.

JOSEPH. Hupfeld remarks that it is used after "Israel" and "Jacob" in the preceding verse, merely as another designation of the whole nation, as lxxx. 1. Hengstenberg says, "Joseph occupies the place of Israel here, because during the whole period of their residence in the land

When He went forth against the land of Egypt,  
Where I heard a language that I knew not :

of Egypt the nation owed everything to Joseph, 'the crowned among his brethren,' Gen. xlix. 26. Their oppression began with the king who knew not Joseph, and this name could only belong to them with reference to that time." And similarly Calvin. But it is far more natural, surely, to see in the use of this name here, as in Psalm lxxx., an indication that the writer belonged to the northern kingdom.

AGAINST THE LAND OF EGYPT, wrongly rendered by the Ancient Verss. "*from the land of Egypt*," because they supposed that "the going forth" could only be that of Israel out of Egypt. But it is simpler to retain the usual meaning of the preposition, and to refer the pronominal suffix, not to Israel, but to God : "When He (God) went forth *against* the land of Egypt," as in the slaying of the first-born (Exod. xi. 4, "I will go forth through the midst of Egypt"), and in all that He did for the deliverance of His people.

As this verse connects the institution of the Feast with a particular event, namely, the departure from Egypt, it does unquestionably furnish a strong argument to those who believe that the allusion is to the Passover. For no other Feast was then instituted. This difficulty is usually got rid of by saying that the note of time is not to be pressed, and that the Feast of Tabernacles did belong to the earlier legislation, Exod. xxiii. 16 ; xxxiv. 22. But I confess this is, to my mind, not quite satisfactory. On the other hand, both the Jewish tradition and the manner of celebration as here described are against the Passover. I incline, therefore, to think that the "new moon" and

"full moon" are put for *any* feasts that were held at those times respectively, all of which, *beginning with the Passover*, might thus be spoken of as dating from the Exodus.

I HEARD. The first person is used because the Psalmist speaks in the name of his people, identifying himself with them.

A LANGUAGE THAT I KNEW NOT. What was this unknown tongue? Two interpretations have been given. It has been explained (1) *Of the language of the Egyptians*, which was a foreign tongue to the Hebrews, who were "strangers in the land of Egypt." Comp. cxiv. 1, "the people of strange language," with Deut. xxviii. 49 ; Is. xxxiii. 19 ; Jer. v. 15. Accordingly, this fact is mentioned as one of the aggravations of their condition in Egypt, like the toiling with "the burden" and "the basket." (2) *Of the voice of God*, a voice which the people had heard as uttered in His judgements upon the Egyptians, and in His covenant made with themselves, but had not understood (comp. Acts vii. 25). This language is then given in substance in a poetical form by the Psalmist, who seems suddenly to hear it, and to become the interpreter to his people of the Divine voice. He here places in a fresh light, gives a new application to, the earlier revelation, the meaning and purpose of which were not then understood.

Hupfeld supposes it to be called an "unknown" language merely because it is Divine, unlike the everyday *known* language of men. Ab. Ezra sees a reference to the words of God uttered on Sinai. So also Delitzsch, who would explain the expression by reference to Exod. vi. 2,

- 6 "I removed his shoulder from the burden,  
His hands ceased from (toiling with) the basket.  
7 In thy distress thou calledst, and I delivered thee,  
I answered thee in the secret place of thunder,  
I proved thee by the waters of Meribah: [Selah.]  
8 'Hear, O my people, and let Me testify unto thee;  
O Israel, if thou wouldest hearken unto Me,

&c. "It was the language of a known, and yet unknown God, which Israel heard from Sinai. God, in fact, now revealed Himself to Israel in a new character, not only as the Redeemer and Saviour of His people from their Egyptian bondage, but also as their King, giving them a law which bound them together as a people, and was the basis of their national existence."

The latter interpretation, which regards the language here spoken of as the voice of God, and as virtually given in the following verses, is now that most commonly adopted.

6. The words of God follow without any indication of a change of speakers. The Prophet identifies himself with, and becomes the organ of, the Divine voice. He reminds Israel of that fact in connection with which the Festival was instituted.

It is as though, amidst all the gladness of the feast, and all the music and the pomp of its celebration, other thoughts arose, not to check, but to guide the current of a holy exultation. The sound of trumpet and timbrel and sacred song must be hushed, while Jehovah speaks to tell His forgetful people the lesson of their past history associated with that festival, the warning and the expostulation suggested by their own perverseness. If they would praise Him aright, it must be with hearts mindful of His goodness, and sensible of their own unworthiness and ingratitude. For

the spirit in which all festivals should be kept, see on the offering of the first-fruits, Deut. xxvi. 1—11.

BURDEN, in allusion to Ex. i. 11; v. 4, 5; vi. 6; where the same word occurs in the plural.

THE BASKET. This word is not found in Exod., and its meaning is doubtful. It may either mean (1) a *basket*, in which heavy burdens were carried, such as are now seen portrayed on the monuments at Thebes; or (2) an *earthen pot*, with reference to the work in clay which the Israelites were compelled to perform. Hence the E.V. renders "his hands were delivered from making *the pots*."

7. THE SECRET PLACE OF THUNDER is the dark mass of the thundercloud in which God shrouds His Majesty. (Comp. xviii. 11; Hab. iii. 4.) Here there is probably a special reference to the cloud from which Jehovah looked forth in the passage through the Red Sea, Exod. xiv. (comp. the note on lxxvii. 16); as there follows the mention of the second great miracle, the giving the water from the rock.

I PROVED THEE. (Deut. xxxiii. 8.) The mention of Israel's sin here, which did not of itself belong to an account of the institution of the feast, prepares the way for the exhortation which follows.

8—10. This is a discourse within a discourse. It is the language which God held with His people when He proved them.

- 9 That there should be in thee no strange god,  
And that thou shouldest not bow down unto the god  
of the stranger !
- 10 —I am Jehovah thy God,  
Who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,  
Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.’
- 11 But My people hearkened not unto My voice,  
And Israel was not willing to obey Me.
- 12 So I gave them up unto the stubbornness of their  
heart,  
That they should walk after their own counsels.
- 13 Oh that My people would hearken unto Me,  
That Israel would walk in My way !
- 14 I would soon put down their enemies,  
And turn My hand against their adversaries.
- 15 The haters of Jehovah should crouch before Him  
And *their* time should be for ever.
- 16 He would feed thee also with the fat of wheat,

8. Comp. Deut. vi. 4, and see the note, Ps. l. 7.

10. Comp. Deut. v. 1, 6, &c.

11. Luther remarks: “It is something dreadful and terrible that He says *My* people. If it had been a stranger, to whom I had shown no particular kindness, &c.”

12. SO I GAVE THEM UP. The word is used of the letting go of captives, slaves, &c.; of giving over to sin, Job viii. 4. This is the greatest and most fearful of all God’s punishments. Comp. lxxviii. 29.

STUBBORNNESS. The word occurs once in the Pentateuch, Deut. xxix. 19, and several times in Jeremiah. The E.V. renders it here, “lusts,” and in all the other passages “imagination,” but wrongly.

13. A transition is here made from the Israel of the past to the Israel of the present, because the history of

the former is repeated in the history of the latter.

14. AND TURN MY HAND. There is no need to supply any ellipse or explain the phrase as meaning “*again* turn.” It is used as in Is. i. 25; Amos i. 8.

15. TO HIM, *i.e.* Israel (for “the haters of Jehovah” are the enemies of Israel); and hence with the usual change from the collective sing. to the plural, “*their* time” in the next clause is “the time of Israel.”

TIME, in the general sense of duration merely, and not implying prosperity. Indeed the word may be used of times of adversity as well as prosperity (see xxxi. 15).

16. The form of the promise is borrowed from Deut. xxxii. 13, &c. Comp. Ezek. xvi. 19.

HE WOULD FEED THEE. The 3rd person instead of the 1st, which recurs

And with honey out of the rock should I satisfy thee.

again in the next clause. These abrupt interchanges of persons are by no means uncommon in Heb. poetry. Comp. xxii. 26.

FAT OF WHEAT, as cxlvii. 14, Deut. xxxii. 14; comp. Gen. xlix. 20. So "fat of the land," Gen. xlv. 18; of

fruits. Numb, xviii. 12, 29, as denoting the best of the kind.

HONEY OUT OF THE ROCK : another image of the abundance and fertility which would have been the reward of obedience.

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## PSALM LXXXII.

THIS Psalm is a solemn rebuke, addressed in prophetic strain, to those who, pledged by their office to uphold the Law, had trampled upon it for their own selfish ends. It is a "Vision of Judgement," in which no common offenders are arraigned, as it is no earthly tribunal before which they are summoned.

God Himself appears, so it seems to the prophet, taking His stand in the midst of that nation whom He had ordained to be the witnesses of His righteousness, amongst the rulers and judges of the nation who were destined to reflect, and as it were to embody in visible form, the majesty of that righteousness. He appears now not, as in the 50th Psalm, to judge His *people*, but to judge *the judges* of that people; not to reprove the congregation at large for their formality and hypocrisy, but to reprove the rulers and magistrates for their open and shameful perversion of justice.

As in the presence of God, the Psalmist takes up his parable against these unjust judges: "How long will ye judge a judgement which is iniquity" (such is the exact force of the original), "and accept the persons of the ungodly?" These men had scandalously desecrated their office. They had been placed in the loftiest position to which any man could aspire. They were sons of the Highest, called by His name, bearing His image, exercising His authority, charged to execute His will, and they ought to have been in their measure His living

representatives, the very pattern and likeness of His righteousness and wisdom. But instead of righteousness they had loved unrighteousness. They had shown favour to the wicked who were powerful and wealthy. They had crushed the poor, the defenceless, the fatherless, whose only protection lay in the unsullied uprightness and incorruptibility of the judge, and whom God Himself had made their charge.

A witness of these wrongs, the Psalmist appeals to them to discharge their duty faithfully and uprightly: "Judge the miserable and fatherless," &c. (ver. 3, 4). But the appeal is in vain. They have neither feeling nor conscience. Morally and intellectually, intellectually because morally, they are corrupt. The light that is in them is darkness. And thus, venal, unscrupulous, base, hard-hearted, the judges and magistrates have loosened the bonds of law, and the consequence is that the foundations of social order are shaken, and the whole fabric threatened with dissolution. Such is the terrible picture of a disorganized society, the very fountains of justice defiled and poisoned, suggested to us by the words in which the Psalmist here addresses the judges of Israel. He himself had thought, he tells us, that their high dignity, and the representative character of their office, placed them so far above other men that they were like beings of a different race; but he warns them that the tyrannous exercise of their power will not last for ever, that, as in the case of other rulers of the world, it may only accelerate their fall. And then, finally, he turns to God, and appeals to Him who is the Judge, not of Israel only, but of the world, to arise and execute judgement in the earth, which they who bore His name had perverted.

The passages which approach most nearly to the Psalm in their general character are (1) the following verses from Isaiah (iii. 13—15): "Jehovah standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. Jehovah will enter into judgement with the ancients of His people and the provinces thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. 'What mean ye that ye beat My people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor?' saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts:"—and (2) Jehoshaphat's charge to his judges, which "he set in the land, throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city" (2 Chron. xix. 5—7): "Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man but for Jehovah, *who is with you in the judgement*. Wherefore now let the fear of Jehovah be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with Jehovah our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts."

It is a peculiarity of the Psalms of Asaph that God is for the most part spoken of as Judge; as exercising that judgement for His own glory, both in Israel and among the nations of the world. See Psalms l., lxxv., lxxvi.

[A PSALM OF ASAPH.]

I GOD standeth in the congregation of God :  
In the midst of (the) gods doth He judge.

I. Earthly rulers and judges are not, as they are too ready to think, supreme, independent, irresponsible. There is One higher than the highest. As Jehoshaphat reminds the judges of Israel, God is with them in the judgement. Calvin quotes, to the like effect, the words of Horace :

“Regum timendorum in proprios  
greges,  
Reges in ipsos imperium est Jovis,”  
&c.

Men cannot see God with their bodily eyes, but He is present with the king on his throne (hence Solomon's throne is called the throne of Jehovah, 1 Chron. xxix. 23), with the judge on the judgement-seat, with all who hold an authority delegated to them by Him.

STANDETH : more literally, “taketh His stand.”

IN THE CONGREGATION OF GOD, *i.e.* in the midst of Israel itself (called in Numb. xxvii. 17, xxxi. 16, Josh. xxii. 16, 17, “the congregation of Jehovah”), and not only in the midst of the people who are the witnesses of His righteousness, but amidst the judges of the people who are the representatives of His righteousness. They are called

GODS, not merely as having their authority from God, but as His vicegerents, as embodying in themselves the Majesty of Law, as those in whom

men look to find the most perfect earthly pattern of Divine attributes, of truth and justice, and mercy and impartiality. This name “gods” is applied to the judges of Israel in the Pentateuch. (See Exod. xxi. 6, xxii. 8, 28.) There, I think, Elohim does not mean God, in whose name judgement is pronounced, but the judges themselves acting in His name and by His authority. If in Exod. xxii. 28, we must render, “thou shalt not revile *God*, nor curse the ruler of thy people,” rather than “thou shalt not revile *the judges*,” &c., still it is implied that the ruler bears the image of God, and that every insult offered to such a representative of God in His kingdom is an insult against God. The use of the name “gods” may have been intended to remind the world how near man, created in God's image, is to God Himself. So in the 8th Psalm it is said, “Thou hast made him a little lower than God.” (See note there on ver. 5.) This would hold especially of those high in office. Thus God says to Moses in reference to Aaron, “Thou shalt be to him instead of God” (Exod. iv. 16). And again : “See I have made thee a god to Pharaoh” (vii. 1). In 1 Sam. xxviii. 13, the witch of Endor says of Samuel, “I saw a god ascending out of the earth” (in allusion either to his majestic appearance or possibly to his office as judge). In Ps. xlv. 6, the



- 2 How long will ye give wrong judgement,  
And accept the persons of the wicked? [Selah.]
- 3 Judge the miserable and fatherless,  
Do justice to the afflicted and needy.
- 4 Rescue the miserable and poor,  
Deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
- 5 They know not, and they understand not,

king is called God (see note there). But it was in connection with the office of judge that the stamp of divinity was most conspicuous. "The judgement is God's," Deut. i. 17; whoever comes before it comes before God. So, again, Moses uses the phrase, "When ye come to me, to inquire of God," Exod. xviii. 15. The same idea is found in heathen writers. Seneca (*de Clementia*, i. 1) makes Nero say: "Electus sum qui in terris Deorum vice fungerer: ego vitæ necisque gentibus arbiter, qualem quisque sortem statumque habeat in manu mea positum est."

2. It is usual to consider what follows, to the end of ver. 6, as the words of God, as He appears, in vision, pleading with the judges of His people. To me it seems preferable to regard the passage as a rebuke addressed, in the true prophetic strain, by the Poet himself, to those whose iniquity called for the protest (somewhat in the same strain as in lviii. 1, 2); ver. 6, in particular, is thus more forcible, and the address to God, in ver. 7, less abrupt.

HOW LONG, like Cicero's "Quousque tandem;" the abuse having become intolerable, because of its long standing.

GIVE WRONG JUDGEMENT, lit. "judge iniquity;" "give a judgement which is iniquity itself:" (the opposite being "judging uprightness," lviii. 1). Comp. Lev. xix. 15.

ACCEPT THE PERSONS. Such, there can be no doubt, is the meaning of the phrase here, and so it is understood by the LXX. Comp. Prov. xviii. 5; Lev. xix. 15. Jehoshaphat in his address to the judges (2 Chron. xix. 7) reminds them that "with the Lord our God is no respect of persons, nor taking of gifts."

3. MISERABLE. See note on xli. 1. NEEDY: it is persons such as these who most of all need the protection of the judge. Their very existence depends on his integrity. The orphan who has lost his natural protectors, the humble who have no powerful friends, the poor who can purchase no countenance, to whom shall they look but to God's vicegerent? And if he violates his trust, God who is the "God of the widow and the fatherless" (lxviii. 5), and who in the Law declares, "Cursed be he who perverteth the cause of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow" (Deut. xxvii. 19), will not leave him unpunished.

DO JUSTICE TO, lit. "justify," *i.e.* give them their due.

5. Those expositors who consider verses 2—6 to contain the words of God, suppose that here, either the Psalmist introduces his own reflections, or that a pause takes place after ver. 4, during which God waits to see whether those whom He rebukes will listen to His rebuke. But the transition from the 2nd person to the 3rd is

In darkness they walk to and fro :  
All the foundations of the earth are out of course.

6 I myself have said, Ye are gods,  
And ye are all sons of the Most High.  
Yet surely like (other) men shall ye die,  
And fall like one of the princes.

so common as to render either exposition unnecessary. It is one strain continued, only that now the infatuation, as before the moral perversion, of the judges is described.

The expostulation falls dead without an echo. The men are infatuated by their position, and blinded by their own pride.

THEY KNOW NOT, absolutely, as in liii. 4 ; lxxiii. 22. Comp. Is i. 3. Moral blindness is the cause of all sin.

IN DARKNESS : Prov. ii. 13.

THEY WALK TO AND FRO : denoting generally the conversation, manner of life, &c.

ALL THE FOUNDATIONS, &c. Comp. lxxv. 3. The dissolution of society is the inevitable result of corruption in high places.

6. I HAVE SAID. The pronoun is emphatic. If these are the words of God, as most interpreters suppose, then in pronouncing judgement upon the judges, He declares that it was He Himself who called them to their office, and gave them the name, together with the dignity which they enjoy. (This interpretation falls in readily with our Lord's words in John x. 34.) If, on the other hand, the Psalmist speaks, he expresses his own feelings and convictions. "There was a time when I myself thought that your office and dignity clothed you with something of a superhuman character, but you have degraded it, and degraded yourselves ; you are but mortal men, your tenure of office is

but for a little while." He does not add, what naturally suggests itself to us, and what Calvin inserts here, that they must shortly give an account before the bar of God. If this is implied in ver. 7, it is not after death.

Our Lord appeals to this verse in His argument with the Jews when they charged Him with blasphemy, "because He, being a man, made Himself God." (John x. 34—38.) His words are : "Is it not written in your Law, I said ye are gods? If it called them gods to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—say ye of Him whom the Father sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God?" The argument is one *a minori ad majus*. How could they charge Him with blasphemy in claiming to be *the Son of God* when their own judges had in their own scriptures been styled *gods*? They moreover were *unrighteous* judges (the worthy ancestors, it is implied, of the unrighteous Pharisees and members of the Sanhedrim, who were our Lord's bitterest opponents), whereas He was One whom the Father had *sanctified*, and sent into the world, and whose life and works were a witness to His righteousness. By nature, and irrespective of their office, they had no right to the name of Elohim, "gods," nor had they proved themselves worthy of it by their character. He was in character as in nature Divine. To them, *the word of God had come*, whether the word of

7 Arise, O God, judge Thou the earth,  
For Thou hast all the nations for Thine inheritance.

God's revelation, or the word by which they had been appointed to their office. He was *Himself the Word* of the Father. Their office was but for a time; they were mortal men, yet wearing, by Divine permission, a Divine name. He had been with the Father before He came into the world, was by Him sealed and set apart, and sent to be not a judge but the Christ, not one of many sons, but emphatically the Son of God, the King of an everlasting kingdom. Both in His

office and in His person He has far more right to the title "Son of God" than they have to that of "gods." There is moreover further implied in this argument that the Old Testament does contain hints, more or less obscure, preludes and foreshadowings, which might have arrested the thoughtful reader, as mysteriously prefiguring that close and real union between God and man which was afterwards fully exhibited in the Incarnation.

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### PSALM LXXXIII.

WE know of no period in the history of Israel when all the various tribes here enumerated were united together for the extermination of their enemy. The annals have preserved no record of a confederacy so extensive. Hence it has been assumed that the enumeration in the Psalm is merely designed to subserve the purposes of poetry, to heighten the colouring, to represent the danger as even greater and more formidable than it really was. It may have been so. Divine inspiration does not change the laws of the imagination, though it may control them for certain ends. Or it may have been that the confederacy as originally formed, and as threatening Israel, was larger than that which actually advanced to the struggle. The wider the alliance, and the more heterogeneous its elements, the more probable it is that some would drop off, through dissensions, or jealousies, or the working of timid counsels. But as this Psalm helps us to complete the narrative in Judges of the defeat of the Midianites (see note

on ver. 11), so it may itself supplement the narrative of the particular event which called it forth. It may describe some event which we read in the history, but which there assumes less formidable proportions, and in so doing it may help us to complete the picture. If so, there can be very little doubt with what portion of the history it best synchronizes. The confederacy must be that which threatened Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat, the account of which is given in 2 Chron. xx. There, as in the Psalm, Moab and Ammon, "the children of Lot," are the leading powers; and though there is some doubt about the reading "other beside the Ammonites," in ver. 1, the Edomites are mentioned as forming a part of the invading army. These might naturally include bordering Arabian tribes, mentioned more in detail in the Psalm.

One expression in Jehoshaphat's prayer bears a close resemblance to the language of the Psalm in ver. 12, when he prays, "Behold, I say, how they reward us to come to cast us out of Thy possession which Thou hast given us to inherit." (2 Chron. xx. 11.) The remark with which the narrative ends: "And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel," is almost like a recorded answer to the prayer with which the Psalm closes.

It has been conjectured, as the Psalm is said to be "a Psalm of Asaph," that it may have been composed by Jahaziel, the "Levite of the sons of Asaph," who encouraged Jehoshaphat's army before it went out to battle; and that the Psalm itself may have been chanted by the band of singers whom the king appointed to precede the army on its march (Ibid. ver. 21.) But no argument can be built upon the title. One thing, however, is clear, the confederacy of which the Psalm speaks was formed before Assyria became a leading power. Moab and Ammon hold the foremost place, while Asshur joins them only as an ally: "they are an arm to the children of Lot." The Poet is fully alive to the danger which threatens his nation. Look where he may, the horizon is black with gathering clouds. Judah is alone, and his enemies are compassing him about. The hosts of invaders are settling like swarms of locusts on the skirts of the land. East, south, and west, they are mustering to the battle. The kindred but ever hostile tribe of Edom on the border, issuing from their mountain fastnesses; the Arab tribes of the desert; the old hereditary foes of Israel, Moab and Ammon; the Philistines, long since humbled and driven back to their narrow strip of territory by the sea, yet still apparently

formidable,—all are on the march ; all, like hunters, are hemming in the lion who holds them at bay.

It is against this formidable confederacy that the Psalmist prays. He prays that it may be with them as with the other enemies of Israel, with Jabin and Sisera, in days of old. But he prays for more than deliverance or victory. • He prays that the Name of Jehovah may be magnified, and that all may seek that Name. Two expressions, in fact, give the key to the Psalm—show us the attitude of the Poet in presence of the danger : ver. 5, “They are confederate against *Thee* ;” ver. 18, “Let them know that *Thou* art most high over all the earth.”

The Psalm consists of two principal divisions :—

I. The first describes the magnitude of the danger, and enumerates the foes who are gathering on all sides, hemming in Judah, and intending by mere force of numbers utterly to crush and destroy it. Ver. 1—8.

II. The next contains the prayer for their complete overthrow, with an appeal to God’s former mighty acts on behalf of His people when threatened by their enemies. Ver. 9—18.

[A SONG. A PSALM OF ASAPH.\*]

- 1 O GOD, keep Thou not silence,  
Hold not Thy peace, and be not still, O God.
- 2 For lo, Thine enemies make a tumult,  
And they that hate Thee have lifted up (their) head.
- 3 Against Thy people they plot craftily,  
And take counsel together against Thy hidden ones.

1. KEEP NOT SILENCE, lit. “Let (there) not (be) silence to Thee,” as in Is. lxii. 7. On the general sense of this verse see note on xxviii. 1.

2. THINE ENEMIES, in itself a ground of appeal and of consolation.

MAKE A TUMULT, lit. “roar like the waves of the sea.”

HAVE LIFTED UP (THEIR) HEAD. Comp. iii. 3 ; xxvii. 6 ; and Judg. viii. 28.

3. PLOT CRAFTILY, lit. “make crafty (their) plot, or secret consultation.”

THY HIDDEN ONES : those whom God holds in the hollow of His

\* See Note on Ps. l. p. 202.

- 4 They say, "Come, let us cut them off that they be no more a nation,  
And that the name of Israel be no more in remembrance."
- 5 For they have taken counsel with (one) heart together,  
Against Thee they are confederate :—
- 6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,  
Moab and the Hagarenes ;
- 7 Gebal and Ammon, and Amalek,  
Philistia, with them that dwell at Tyre.
- 8 Asshur also is joined with them,

hand ; those to whom He is a wall of fire round about them, that none may do them hurt ; those of whom He says, he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of Mine eye. Comp. xvii. 8 ; xxvii. 5 ; xxxi. 20.

4. THAT THEY BE NO MORE A NATION. Comp. Jer. xlviii. 2 ; Is. vii. 8 ; and similar phrases in xvii. 1. xxv. 2. They would in their fury blot out Israel from the map of the world, or, as Calvin says, "it is as if they had formed the design of subverting the counsel of God on which the continued existence of the Church hath been founded."

5. WITH (ONE) HEART TOGETHER. perhaps it would be simpler and more certain to render : "They have taken counsel in their heart together" (Jerome, *corde pariter*), the heart being the source of their machinations. Comp. v. 9 ; lxiv. 6 ; 1 Chron. xiii. 38.

AGAINST THEE, as in ver. 3, "against Thy people." God and His people are one. So our Lord says to Saul, "Why persecutest thou Me ?"

6—8. The enumeration of the confederate tribes. First, those on the south and east. Then, those on the west, Philistia and Tyre. Lastly, the Assyrians in the north, not yet re-

garded as a formidable power, but merely as allies of Moab and Ammon.

6. THE TENTS, as properly descriptive of the nomad Arabian tribes.

THE ISHMAELITES, according to Gen. xxv. 18, were spread over the whole tract of country south of Palestine, lying between Egypt and the Persian Gulf. Part of this territory is occupied by Amalekites in 1 Sam. xv. 7.

THE HAGARENES dwelt to the east of Palestine, in the land of Gilead. They were driven out by the tribe of Reuben in the time of Saul (1 Chron. v. 10, 18—20).

7. GEBAL, usually supposed to denote the mountainous country south of the Dead Sea, in the neighbourhood of Petra (Arab. *Dgebel*).

8. ASSHUR. If the Psalm was written in Jehoshaphat's reign, this is the first mention of the Assyrians since the days of Nimrod, and here evidently they hold a subordinate place. We do not hear of the Assyrian kingdom as a great power formidable to Israel till the time of Menahem, who "was reduced to the necessity of buying off an invasion of the Assyrians (the first incursion of that people) under Pul." (2 Kings xv. 19.)

They have been an arm to the children of Lot.

- 9 Do Thou to them as unto Midian,  
 As unto Sisera, as unto Jabin at the torrent of  
 Kishon,  
 10 Who were destroyed at En-dor,  
 Who became dung for the land.  
 11 Make them, (make) their nobles, like 'Oreb and like  
 Zeeb;  
 Yea, all their princes, like Zebah and like Zalmunna,

THEY HAVE BEEN AN ARM. Comp. xlv. 3, lxxi. 18; Is. xxxiii. 2. This agrees with the statement in Chronicles that Moab and Ammon were the leaders of the confederacy.

9. MIDIAN, mentioned by anticipation with reference, not to the example which immediately follows, but to that in ver. 11. The victory of Gideon over the Midianites was one of the most glorious in the national history, one the memory of which was fondly cherished. When Isaiah would describe the victories which are to precede the peaceful reign of the Messiah, he can compare the overthrow of the enemy to nothing so well as to that on "the day of Midian." The allusion to it here may also have been suggested by the fact, that many of the enemies now arrayed against Israel were the same as on that occasion; for with the Midianites were the "Amalekites and all the children of the East." (Judg. vi. 33. See Is. ix. 4, x. 26; Hab. iii. 7.)

SISERA . . . JABIN. See the history in Judg. iv. v.

THE TORRENT OF KISHON, which swept away the corpses of the enemy, Judg. v. 21. Others, "the valley or Wâdi of Kishon:"—the Hebrew word means both.

10. EN-DOR is not mentioned in Judges, but the Psalm shows us that

tradition associated with that spot the death of the two chiefs. It is a considerable but now deserted village, four miles south of Tabor. The name occurs besides, Josh. xvii. 11; 1 Sam. xxviii. 7.

11. 'OREB AND ZEEB, the two "princes," or probably "generals of the army," whilst Zebah and Zalmunna have the title of "kings." (Judg. vii. 25; viii. 5). The allusions here and in Is. x. 26, help us to complete the narrative in Judges. Isaiah implies that the slaughter must have been awful beyond anything that the history records, for "he places it in the same rank with the two most tremendous disasters recorded in the whole of the history of Israel—the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and of the army of Sennacherib." Here the discomfiture and flight of the Midianites is prominent. "In imagery both obvious and vivid to every native of the gusty hills and plains of Palestine, though to us comparatively unintelligible, the Psalmist describes them as driven over the uplands of Gilead like the clouds of chaff blown from the threshing-floors; chased away like the spherical masses of dry weeds which course over the plains of Esdraelon and Philistia—flying with the dreadful hurry and confusion of the flames, that rush and

- 12 Who said : " Let us take to ourselves  
The pastures of God in possession."  
13 O my God, make them as the whirling dust,  
As stubble before the wind.  
14 As a fire that burneth a forest,  
And as a flame that setteth the mountains in a blaze,  
15 So pursue them with Thy tempest,  
And with Thy hurricane make them afraid.  
16 Fill their faces with confusion,  
That they may seek Thy Name, O Jehovah.

leap from tree to tree and hill to hill when the wooded mountains of a tropical country are by chance ignited." See the article OREB, in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*.

12. PASTURES. Others, "habitations." But there is no reason to depart from the usual signification. See on lxxix. 7. Comp. xxiii. 2. Israel is God's flock lying down in His pastures. The figure accords with the usage of Psalms ascribed to Asaph.

13. AS THE WHIRLING DUST. The same word is rendered by the E. V. in the parallel passage, Is. xvii. 13 : a rolling thing.

"And (they) shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind,  
And like a rolling thing before the whirlwind."

Here both the A. V. and P. B. V. have "as a wheel," and so all the ancient versions. But the parallel rather suggests "spherical masses of weeds" (as Mr. Grove renders), chaff, dust, anything driven in rolling masses by the wind.

14. The image in this verse is also found in Isaiah. See chap. ix. 18, x. 17, 18 ; and comp. Zech. xii. 6.

Hupfeld connects this with the

preceding verse, and so supposes a confusion in the figure (such as he finds also in xxi. 9), the sense being, "O my God, make them as a forest which is burned with fire." But it is far better to take ver. 14 and ver. 15 as the two members of the comparison, and then there is no need to resort to such metonymy. Both images are as consistent as they are grand. In both there is the same thought of the rushing wind—in the first sweeping all before it, in the second spreading the terrible conflagration ; in the two combined, the swift breathless pursuit and the unsparing slaughter.

15. With this verse and what follows comp. xxxv. 4—6.

16. The object with which the Psalmist prays for the Divine judgment upon the foes who are gathering to swallow up his people is remarkable. It is "that they may seek the Name of Jehovah, that they may know (ver. 18) that He is most high over all the earth." This is the nobler aspiration which mingles with the prayer for vengeance. The man in danger, feeling his own and his country's peril, desires to see his enemies destroyed with a slaughter as terrible, a discomfiture as complete, as that on the "day of Midian." The man who loves and fears Jehovah



- 17 Let them be ashamed, and made afraid evermore,  
 Yea, let them be confounded and perish,  
 18 And let them know that Thou, (even) Thy Name  
 Jehovah alone,  
 Art most high over all the earth.

desires to see others, even his enemies, love and fear Him too. A pious Englishman in Lucknow, or Delhi, or Cawnpore, during the Indian Mutiny, might have understood how possible it was to reconcile the two parts of the prayer.

The prayer in ver. 18 might indeed only mean that by their overthrow they should be forced to acknowledge the power and greatness of Jehovah, an external subjection as in xxxi. 17, but the prayer that they should *seek His Name* must mean more than this.

The end of all God's judgements, as of all history, is the same, that all should confess that Jehovah is One, and His Name One, Zech. xiv. 9.

18. THOU, THY NAME, *i.e.* Thou who dost reveal Thyself as Jehovah. Calvin observes that the pronoun is emphatic, because there is implied a comparison between the true God, the God of Israel, and all false gods, "as though the prophet had said, Lord, make them feel that their idols which they have made for themselves are nothing."

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## PSALM LXXXIV.

IN its general character this Psalm very nearly resembles Psalm xlii.—xliii. Like that, it is the ardent outpouring of a man of no common depth and tenderness of feeling, the expression of a devoted love for the house and worship of Jehovah. Like that, it is written under circumstances of suffering and depression, at a time when the Psalmist was in exile, or at a distance from the Sanctuary. Like that, it touches, and even more fully, on the celebration of the national feast, and pictures the crowd of pilgrims on their way to the Holy City. In both Psalms there is the same deep pathos, the same "exquisite delicacy and tenderness of thought," in both the same strain of remembrance and of anticipation, half sad, half joyful. Certain turns of expression are the same in both. Compare ver. 2 here with

xlii. 1, 2; ver. 4 here, "they will still (or *yet*) praise Thee," with xlii. 5, "for I shall yet praise Him;" the name of God as "the living God," ver. 2 here, and xlii. 2 (occurring nowhere else in the Psalter); the phrase, "appear before God," ver. 7 here, and xlii. 2; "Thy dwellings" or "tabernacles," ver. 1 here, and xliii. 3. But with all these resemblances, there is this difference, that here nothing is said to define exactly the locality in which the Psalm was written; nor is there any allusion to the taunts of enemies, to "men of deceit and wrong," such as meet us in xlii.—xliii.

From the general likeness in structure, and sentiment, and colouring of language, and yet perfect distinctness and originality, of the two Poems, Ewald is doubtless right in concluding that both are by the same author.

The former part of this Psalm may also be compared with Psalm lxiii., and there are expressions which connect it with Psalms xxvii. and lxxv.

Mr. Plumptre, who gives reasons for concluding that all the Korahite Psalms were written during the reign of Hezekiah, by members of that Levitical family, considers the Psalm to have been written on the same occasion as Psalm xlii., and supposes that "a devout Levite or company of Levites was hindered by the presence of Sennacherib's army from going up at the appointed seasons to take their turn in the ministrations of the Temple." He draws attention to "the touch which indicates the closest possible familiarity with the Temple precincts. The Levite minstrel remembers 'the sparrow and the swallow' that fluttered about the courts of the Sanctuary there, and built their nests upon its eaves, as they now love to haunt the enclosures of the Mosque of Omar." He observes what new force the Psalmist's words acquire, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God," &c., if we regard them not as the vague indeterminate wish of any devout worshiper, but remember that they fell from the lips of one of those sons of Korah "whose special function it was to be '*keepers of the gate of the tabernacle*' in the time of David (1 Chron. ix. 19), and sure to be appointed therefore to an analogous service in the Temple." And he concludes that "this Psalm, like Psalm xlii., was written by some Levite detained against his will 'in the land of Jordan' and 'on the slopes of Hermon,' somewhere, *i.e.* in the upland Gilead country, and that when the recollection of past journeys to Jerusalem would bring back the scenes of travel through the valley of the Jordan, which, with its deep depression and tropical climate,

had from the earliest date been famous for its balsam-weeping trees. Some parched rock-ravine on the way would be that which the Psalmist would think of as having been watered by the tears of pilgrims." (*Biblical Studies*, pp. 163—166.)

The Psalm consists of two principal divisions: the first of which dwells on the blessedness of God's service in His house, the supreme happiness of those who are permitted to take their part in it, ver. 1—7; the second consists of a prayer that the Psalmist himself, though shut out from access to the Sanctuary, may nevertheless find God to be his sun and shield, ver. 8—12.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. UPON THE GITTITH.\* A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH.†]

- 1 How lovely are Thy dwellings, O Jehovah (of) Hosts!  
2 My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of  
Jehovah;

1. THY DWELLINGS. The plural may either be used to denote *the several parts* of the sanctuary (see on lxviii. 35), or perhaps rather poetically, instead of the singular. Comp. xliii. 3, xlv. 4, cxxxii. 5, 7.

And the same may be said of the plural "courts," in the next verse.

2. By the COURTS, that part of the building is meant which was for the people at large. (So in Is. i. 12, "Who hath required this at your

\* See note on Ps. viii. p. 37.

† These words are first found in the inscriptions of Pss. xlii., xlvii. It is remarkable that the inscription should assume this anonymous character, mentioning not the individual singer, but only the family to which he belonged; especially when we have in the inscriptions of other Psalms (as, for instance, lxxiii.—lxxxiii.) the individual, instead of the family, or the like. This may be owing to some circumstance with which we are unacquainted. These Levitical singers may have been like the Bardic families or colleges in other nations, especially those living in the mountain regions. All may have made poetry and music their profession, and only in rare cases did an individual, perhaps, like Asaph, acquire great personal reputation. The "Korah" whose "sons" are here spoken of, is the Levite who headed the insurrection against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness (Numb. xvi.). We find his descendants existing as a powerful Levitical family in the time of David, at least if they are to be identified, as is probable, with the Korahites mentioned in 1 Chron. xii. 6, who, like our own warlike bishops of former times, seem to have known how to doff the priestly vestment for the soldier's armour, and whose hand could wield the sword as well as strike the harp. These Korahites were a part of the band who acknowledged David as their chief at Ziklag; warriors "whose faces, it is said, were like the faces of lions, and who were (for speed) like gazelles upon the mountains." According to 1 Chron. ix. 19, the Korahites were, in David's time, keepers of the threshold of the Tabernacle; and still earlier, in the time of Moses, watchmen at the entrance of the camp of the Levites. In 1 Chron. xxvi. 1—19, we find two branches of this family associated with that of Merari, as guardians of the doors of the Temple. There is probably an allusion to this their office, in Ps. lxxxiv. 10. But the Korahites were also celebrated musicians and singers, 1 Chron. vi. 16—33, where Heman, one of the three famous musicians of the time, is said to be a Korahite (comp. 1 Chron. xxv.). The musical reputation of the family continued in the time of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 19.

My heart and my flesh cry aloud to the living God.

- 3 Yea the sparrow hath found a house,  
And the swallow a nest for herself where she hath  
laid her young,  
(Even) Thine altars, O Jehovah (of) Hosts,  
My King and my God!  
4 Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house!

hand to tread my *courts*." Comp. lxxv. 4, cxvi. 19.)

On this intense expression of personal affection to God and His worship, see note on lxiii. 1.

SOUL . . . HEART . . . FLESH. Even more strongly than there (where "heart" is omitted) marking the whole man, with every faculty and affection. The verbs are also very expressive. The first, *LONGETH*, means literally, "hath grown pale," as with the intensity of the feeling; the second, *FAINTETH*, is more exactly, "faileth," or "is consumed," (Job xix. 27).

CRY ALOUD. The verb in this conjugation is used elsewhere of a *joyful* utterance, and some would retain this meaning here, as if, even amidst the sadness of exile, there mingled with his longing a joy as he remembers, and anticipates, in spite of all that is adverse, communion with God in Zion.

LIVING GOD. See note on xlii. 2, the only other place in the Psalms where God is so named. This particular form of expression, *'El Chay*, occurs but twice beside in the O. T., Josh. iii. 10, Hos. i. 10. In the New Testament the name "Living God" is found in St. Matthew's and St. John's Gospels, in the speech of Paul and Barnabas in the Acts (xiv. 15), in several of St. Paul's Epistles, four times in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and once in the Revelation.

3. MY KING AND MY GOD. Thus

joined also in v. 2. The Psalmist, at a distance from Zion, envies the birds who are free to build their nests in the immediate precincts of the Temple. They have a happiness which he cannot enjoy. They are nearer to God, so it seems to him in his despondency, than he is. This is all that is meant. Nor can I see anything "trivial" in such a thought. "Thine altars" is a poetical way of saying "Thy house." It is manifestly a special term instead of a general. Yet it has been seriously argued, that no birds could or would ever be suffered to build their nests on the altar. Surely this sort of expression, which is hardly a figure, is common enough. *A parte potiori fit denominatio*. We say, "There goes a sail." What should we think of a man who should argue that a sail cannot go. The altars mean the Temple. There was

"No jutting frieze,  
Buttress, nor coigne of vantage, but  
these birds  
Had made their pendant bed,"

not to mention that trees grew within the sacred enclosure, where birds might have built their nests. The comparison between the lot of the birds, happy in their nearness to the house of God, and the Psalmist far removed and in exile, is suggested rather than developed; but it is sufficiently obvious.

4. Even the birds are happy, who find shelter beneath the sacred roof;

They will be still praising Thee. [Selah.]

5 Blessed are the men whose strength is in Thee,

In whose hearts are (those) ways,

6 Who passing through the Vale of Weeping, make it a place of springs;

far more happy—truly blessed are they who dwell there, rendering the reasonable service of a thankful heart. The blessedness of God's house is that there men *praise* Him. This it was that made that house so precious to the Psalmist. And what Christian man can climb higher than this,—to find in the praise of God the greatest joy of his life?

THEY WILL BE STILL PRAISING THEE, *i.e.* "always, continually."

5—7. But not only blessed are they who dwell in the holy place in God's city, and near to His house; blessed are they who can visit it, with the caravan of pilgrims, at the great national festivals. They cherish the remembrance of such seasons. Every spot of the familiar road, every station at which they have rested, lives in their heart. The path may be dry and dusty, through a lonely and sorrowful valley, but nevertheless they love it. The pilgrim band, rich in hope, forgets the trials and difficulties of the way: hope changes the rugged and stony waste into living fountains. The vale blossoms as if the sweet rain of heaven had covered it with blessings. Hope sustains them at every step; from station to station they renew their strength as they draw nearer to the end of their journey, till at last they appear before God, present themselves as His worshipers, in His sanctuary in Zion.

Such appears to be the general scope of the passage, though the meaning of the second clause, "In whose heart are the ways," has been much questioned.

There have been various interpretations of the word "ways," but they do not fall in with the general strain and tenour of verses 5—7. The *WAYS* (lit. "highways") are those traversed by the caravans of pilgrims—the ways to the sanctuary. No wonder that in all ages men have rejoiced to find in this beautiful picture an image of the Christian life. To what can that so aptly be compared as to a pilgrimage in a vale of tears? Is it not by the hope of appearing before God in the heavenly Jerusalem that the Christian is sustained? Does he not find fountains of refreshment in the wilderness of the world? Does not God's grace visit him like the sweet refreshing shower from heaven? Does he not advance from strength to strength, from grace to grace, from glory to glory, till he reaches his journey's end?

6. THE VALE OF WEeping. The meaning of the word "Baca" is doubtful, but all the ancient versions render it by "weeping," and the Masora remarks that it is the same as "Bacah," *weeping*. Comp. xxiii. 4, "valley of the shadow of death." Burckhardt tells us that he found a valley in the neighbourhood of Sinai, which bore the name of "the valley of weeping."

Others take Baca to be the name of a tree, as it is in 2 Sam. v. 24, 1 Chron. xiv. 14; and either (as the E. V. there renders) "a mulberry-tree," or more probably some species of balsam-tree, dropping its tears of balm, and so taking its name from the Hebrew root which signifies

Yea, the early rain covereth (it) with blessings.

7 They go from strength to strength,  
(Every one of them) appeareth before God in Zion.

8 O Jehovah, God (of) Hosts, hear my prayer,  
Give ear, O God of Jacob. [Selah.]

9 See, O God our shield,  
And look upon the face of Thine anointed;

10 For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand  
(elsewhere);

I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God,  
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For Jehovah God is a sun and a shield,

“weeping.” In this case some sandy valley is meant, where the trees grew, and which took its name from them. “With the love for detecting allusive and, as it were, ominous meanings in proper names, which was characteristic of Hebrew thought at all times, . . . the Psalmist plays upon its etymological significance.”—PLUMPTRE, *Biblical Studies*, p. 165.

The meaning of the verse is, that the faith and hope and joy of the pilgrims make the sandy waste a place of fountains, and then (this is the Divine side of the picture) God from heaven sends down the rain of His grace. The word denotes the soft, gentle, autumnal rain (Joel ii. 23) which fell after the crops were sown. Thus the Vale of Weeping becomes a Vale of Joy.

A PLACE OF SPRINGS. This is the strict meaning of the word, rather than “a spring” or “fountain.” Comp. cvii. 35.

7. FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH, ever renewing it, in spite of the toils of the way, and in view of the journey's end, as Is. xl. 31. Comp. John i. 16, and 2 Cor. iii. 18.

APPEARETH. See note on xlii. 2.

Comp. especially Exod. xxiii. 17, xxxiv. 23.

8. The Psalmist has pictured to himself the blessedness of those who dwell in the holy city, in immediate proximity to God's house, the blessedness of those who can join the pilgrim caravans. Now he pours out a prayer for himself that he, though distant, may share the same blessing.

9. OUR SHIELD, and again ver. 11; so God is called in iii. 3, where see note, xxviii. 7, &c.

LOOK UPON THE FACE OF THINE ANOINTED. This following immediately upon the words in ver. 8, “hear *my* prayer,” favours the supposition that the Psalm was written by the king. So also does the use of the pronoun of the first person in ver. 10, introduced by the conjunction “for.” Another might, however, offer the prayer on his behalf. See xx., xxi., xli. 6.

10. BE A DOOR-KEEPER, lit. “lie on the threshold,” or “busy oneself on the threshold;” the lowest place, the meanest office in God's house is a happiness and an honour beyond all that the world has to offer.

11. JEHOVAH GOD (Elohim). This

Jehovah giveth grace and glory,

No good thing doth He withhold from them that  
walk uprightly.

12 O Jehovah (of) Hosts,

Blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee!

form of the Divine Name is characteristic, as is well known, of the section, Gen. ii. 4—iii. 24, where it first occurs. This is the only passage in the Psalter where it is employed.

A SUN. This is the only place where God is directly so called. In other passages we have the more general name of "Light," as in xxvii. 1. Comp. however, Is. lx. 19, 20; Rev. xxi. 23; and the expression "Sun of Righteousness," as applied to the Messiah, Mal. iv. 2.

UPRIGHTLY, lit. "in perfectness;"

see xv. 2. To such persons God will show His salvation, all that is comprised in those two great words "grace" and "glory," whether they can enter His earthly house or not.

And the Psalmist rises at last to the joyful conviction, not only that they are blessed who dwell in God's house (ver. 4), or they who swell the festal throng on their way to that house (ver. 5), but they who, whether they worship in it or not, are one with Him by faith: "Blessed is the man who *trusteth* in Thee."

## PSALM LXXXV.

THERE seems every reason to conclude that this Psalm was written after the return of the exiles from the Babylonish captivity. It opens with an acknowledgement of God's goodness and mercy in the national restoration, in terms which could hardly apply to any other event. But it passes immediately to earnest entreaty for deliverance from the pressure of existing evils, in language which almost contradicts the previous acknowledgement. First we hear the grateful confession, "Thou hast turned the captivity of Jacob;" and then we have the prayer, "Turn us, O God of our salvation." If the third verse contains the joyful announcement, "Thou hast withdrawn all Thy wrath," &c., the fifth pleads as if no such assurance had been

given : "Wilt Thou for ever be angry with us? Wilt Thou draw out Thine anger to all generations?"

The most probable way of explaining this conflict of opposing feelings is by referring the Psalm to the circumstances mentioned by Nehemiah (chap. i. 3). The exiles on their return, he learnt, were "in great affliction and reproach." And when he obtained leave to go to Jerusalem himself, it was only in the midst of perpetual opposition and discouragement (chap iv.) that he was able to carry on his work of restoration. The bright prospect which was opening before them had been quickly dashed. They had returned indeed, but it was to a desolate land and a forsaken city, whose walls were cast down, and her gates burned with fire; whilst jealous and hostile tribes were ever on the watch to assail and vex them. Hence it is that the entreaty for mercy follows so hard upon the acknowledgement that mercy has been vouchsafed. The 126th Psalm is conceived in a somewhat similar strain. In the latter portion of this Psalm (from ver. 8) the present misery is forgotten in the dawning of a glorious future. The prayer has been uttered; the storm of the soul is hushed; in quietness and resignation the Psalmist sets himself to hear what God will say, and the Divine answer is given, not in form, but in substance, in ver. 9—12. It is a glowing prophecy of Messianic times, most naturally connecting itself with the hopes which the return from Babylon had kindled afresh, and well fitted to enable those who heard it to triumph over the gloom and despondency of the present.

It is not surprising, considering the bright picture which the latter verses contain, that this Psalm should have been appointed by the Church for the services of Christmas Day.

According to Hupfeld, the Psalm falls into two nearly equal portions :—

(1) The Prayer of the people, or for the people, ver. 1—7; (2) the Divine promise, ver. 8—13. Ewald and Olshausen suppose that the first was intended to be sung by the congregation, the second by the Priest, who after prayer seeks and receives the Divine answer.



[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH.\*]

- 1 THOU hast become favourable, O Jehovah, unto Thy land,  
Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.
- 2 Thou hast taken away the iniquity of Thy people,  
Thou hast covered all their sin. [Selah.]
- 3 Thou hast withdrawn all Thy wrath,  
Thou hast turned from the fierceness of Thine anger.
- 4 Turn us, O God of our salvation,  
And cause Thine indignation towards us to cease.
- 5 Wilt Thou for ever be angry with us?  
Wilt Thou draw out Thine anger to all generations?
- 6 Wilt not THOU quicken us again,  
That Thy people may rejoice in Thee?
- 7 Show us Thy loving-kindness, O Jehovah,  
And grant us Thy salvation.
- 8 I would hear what God Jehovah will speak,

1—3. The acknowledgement of God's goodness to His people in their restoration from the Babylonish captivity.

1. THOU HAST BROUGHT BACK, &c. See on lxviii. 18.

2. TAKEN AWAY . . . COVERED. Both words are used in xxxii. 1, where see notes.

5. FOR EVER. The emphatic word placed first, because there seemed to be no end to their calamities. Even the return to their own land had brought them apparently no rest, no consolation, no hope for the future.

6. THOU. The pronoun is emphatic; for God alone can thus revive the sad hearts and broken hopes of His people.

QUICKEN, &c. Comp. lxxi. 20, lxxx. 18.

IN THEE. Not in any earthly blessings, even when they are vouchsafed; not in corn, or wine, or oil; not in the fatness of the earth or the dew of heaven; but in Him who giveth all these things, who giveth more than all these, Himself.

8. I WOULD HEAR, or, "let me hear." Having uttered his sorrows and his prayer for better days, he would now place himself in the attitude of calm and quiet expectation. Like Habakkuk, he will betake him to his watch-tower, and wait to hear what the Lord will speak. "He might have said," Calvin observes, "what the Lord will *do*; but since

\* See note on Ps. lxxxiv., p. 411.

For He will speak peace to His people and His beloved,

Only let them not turn again to folly.

9 Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him,

That glory may dwell in our land.

10 Loving-kindness and truth have met together ;

Righteousness and peace have kissed (each other).

11 Truth springeth out of the earth,

And righteousness hath looked down out of heaven.

12 Jehovah will give that which is good,

And our land will give her increase.

God's benefits to His Church flow from His promises, the Psalmist mentions His mouth rather than His hand, and at the same time teaches us that patience depends on the calm listening ear of faith."

PEACE : that is God's great word, which in fact sums up and comprises all else, peace with Him declared to all who are HIS BELOVED, the objects of His loving-kindness (see on xvi. 10) having the privileges of their covenant relation to Him.

FOLLY : so the infatuation of sin is spoken of. Comp. xiv. 1, xlix. 13. Or, perhaps idolatry may be meant, and especially if the reference is to the Babylonish captivity.

9. GLORY, *i.e.* the manifested Presence of God tabernacling visibly amongst them, as of old. This hope was destined to have its fulfilment, but in a better and a higher sense, when He who was the brightness of the Father's glory tabernacled in human flesh, and men "beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."

10. The four virtues here mentioned are, as Calvin remarks, the four cardinal virtues of Christ's kingdom. Where these reign amongst men, there must be true and perfect felicity. He adds, however, "if any one prefers to understand, by the

loving-kindness and truth here mentioned, attributes of God, I have no objection to such a view." But the truth is, the last are the basis and source of the first.

11. The earth brings forth truth as she brings forth the natural fruits, and righteousness looks down from heaven like some approving angel on the renewed and purified earth.

The figures are designed in both verses to show that these virtues are not regarded merely in their separate aspect, but as meeting, answering one another, conspiring in perfect harmony to one glorious end. For this mutual blessing from the heaven above and the earth beneath, comp. Is. xlv. 8, Hos. ii. 21—23.

12. The Psalmist passes from spiritual to temporal blessings. "If anyone objects to this mixing of the two, the answer is easy: there is nothing to shock us, if God, whilst He blesses the faithful with spiritual blessings, should vouchsafe to them also some taste of His fatherly love in the good things of this world ; for St. Paul assures us that godliness hath the promise of this life as well as that which is to come."—*Calvin*. He adds an important remark: "This verse, moreover, shows us that the power of fruitfulness was not once for all bestowed on the earth (as men of

13 Righteousness shall go before Him,  
And follow His footsteps in the way.

no religion choose to imagine, that God at the creation gave to the several parts of His universe their several office, and then left them alone to pursue their own course),

but that every year it is fertilized by the secret virtue of God, according as He sees fit to testify to us His goodness.

## PSALM LXXXVI.

THIS Psalm, which is inserted amongst a series of Korahite Psalms, is the only one in the Third Book ascribed to David. That it was written by him we can hardly suppose. Many of the expressions are, no doubt, such as we meet with in his Psalms, but there are also many which are borrowed from other passages of Scripture. Indeed, the numerous adaptations of phrases employed by other writers may reasonably be taken as evidence of a much later date. Further, the style is, as Delitzsch remarks, liturgical rather than poetical, and is wholly wanting in that force, animation, and originality for which David's poems are remarkable. The Psalm is stamped by the use of the Divine Name, *Adonai*, which occurs in it seven times.

There is no regular strophical division, nor is it always easy to trace clearly the connection between the several parts of the Psalm. Hupfeld denies that there is any. Tholuck has traced it far more carefully than any commentator I am acquainted with, and in the notes I have given the substance of his remarks.

The introductory portion (ver. 1—5) consists of a number of earnest petitions, based on several distinct pleas—the suffering (ver. 1), the faith (ver. 2), the continued and earnest supplication (ver. 3, 4) of the Psalmist, and the mercy and goodness of God (ver. 5).

In the next part (ver. 6—13) he resumes his petition; expresses his confidence that God will hear him, comforting himself with the majesty and greatness of God, who is able to do all that he asks

(ver. 8—10 ; prays for guidance and a united heart, mixing with his prayer resolves as to his conduct, and thanksgiving for deliverance (ver. 11—13).

Finally (ver. 14—17) he speaks of the peril by which he has been threatened, turns to God with affectionate confidence as to a gracious God, and casts himself fearlessly upon His mercy.

[A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 BOW down Thine ear, O Jehovah, answer me !  
For I am afflicted and poor.
- 2 Keep my soul, for I am one whom Thou lovest ;  
Do THOU, O my God, save Thy servant,  
Who putteth his trust in Thee.
- 3 Be gracious unto me, O Lord,  
For unto Thee do I cry all the day.
- 4 Rejoice the soul of Thy servant,  
For unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
- 5 For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive,  
And plenteous in loving-kindness to all them that  
call upon Thee.

1. BOW DOWN, &c. Comp. lv. 1,  
2.

**AFFLICTED AND POOR:** alleged in the same way as a reason, xl. 17. This is not the highest ground which can be taken in pressing for an answer to our prayer, but it is a ground which God suffers us to take, both because He declares Himself to be the helper of the needy (comp. xii. 5), and because it is the sense of their need and misery which drives men to God. Comp. for the same epithets xxxv. 10, xxxvii. 14, lxxiv. 21.

**2. ONE WHOM THOU LOVEST.** The first plea was his need ; now he pleads his own covenant relation to God. It is unfortunate that the E.V. renders : "for I am *holy*." (The margin gives the true rendering.)

The appeal is not to anything in himself, but to God's goodness. This is clear from ver. 5. At the same time he does not hesitate to say what the attitude of his heart is towards God, and to urge his simple absolute confidence in God, as well as his unceasing earnest prayer, as reasons why he should be heard. This is the language of honest, straightforward simplicity, not of self-righteousness.

4. I LIFT UP MY SOUL, as in xxv. 1.

**5. READY TO FORGIVE.** The adjective occurs nowhere else. The general sentiment of the verse (repeated in 15) is borrowed from such passages as Exod. xx. 6, xxxiv. 6, 9 ; Numb. xiv. 18, 19.

It is on the broad ground of God's mercy, and of that mercy as freely

- 6 Give ear, O Jehovah, to my prayer,  
And hearken to the voice of my supplications.  
7 In the day of my distress, I will call upon Thee,  
For Thou wilt answer me.  
8 There is none like unto Thee among the gods, O  
Lord,  
Neither (are there any works) like unto Thy works.  
9 All nations whom Thou hast made  
Shall come and bow themselves down before Thee,  
O Lord,  
And shall give glory to Thy name.  
10 For great art Thou, and doest wondrous things :  
Thou art God alone.  
11 Teach me, O Jehovah, Thy way,  
I will walk in Thy truth ;

bestowed on *all* who seek it, that he rests. He applies the general truth (ver. 5) to his own case (ver. 6). In ver. 7 he pleads again the need, under the pressure of which he cries to God: it is no unmanly, petulant, peevish complaint that he utters. The calamity is real, and there is but one who has power to deliver him.

6. Comp. v. 1 ; xxviii. 2 ; cxxx. 2.

7. Comp. xx. 1 ; l. 15 ; lxxvii. 2 ; xvii. 6.

8—10. There are two kinds of doubt which are wont in the hour of temptation to assail the soul; the doubt as to God's *willingness*, and the doubt as to God's *power* to succour. The first of these the Psalmist has already put from him: he now shows that he has overcome the second. God is able as well as willing to help, and every being on the face of the earth who receives help, receives it from the hand of Him who is the only God, and who shall one day be recognised (so speaks the strong prophetic hope within him, ver. 9) as the only God. This hope rests on the fact that God has created all men

("all nations whom *Thou hast made*"), and nothing can be imagined more self-contradictory than that the spirit which has come from God should remain for ever unmindful of its source. In ver. 8 it might seem as if God were merely compared with the gods of the nations. In ver. 10 they are plainly said to be "no gods," though they "be called gods." There is but one God: "Thou art God alone."

8. The first half of the verse is borrowed from Exod. xv. 11. Comp. lxxxix. 8, lxxi. 19, &c. With the second half comp. Deut. iii. 24.

9. Nearly as in xxii. 27. Comp. lxvi. 4 ; Is. lxvi. 18, 23 ; Zech. xiv. 9, 16.

10. Comp. lxxvii. 13, 14, with Ex. xv. 11. See also lxxxiii. 18 ; 2 Kings xix. 15, 19 ; Neh. ix. 6.

11. The first clause is word for word as in xxvii. 11. Comp. xxv. 4. WALK IN THY TRUTH, xxvi. 3.

Although in a great strait, and in fear of his enemies, the Psalmist, like all who pray aright, offers first the petition, "Hallowed be Thy Name," before he asks, "Give us this day our

Unite my heart to fear Thy Name ;

12 I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,

And I will glorify Thy Name for ever.

13 For Thy loving-kindness is great toward me,

And Thou hast delivered my soul from the unseen world beneath.

14 O God, the proud are risen against me,

And an assembly of violent men have sought after my soul,

And have not set Thee before them.

daily bread," and "deliver us from evil." He confesses that his spiritual eye is not yet perfectly enlightened his heart not yet perfect with God. And while he rejects every other way, every other rule of life, but the eternal rule of God's truth, he prays first that he may more clearly discern that way, and then that all the various desires, interests, passions, that agitate the human heart, may have no hold upon him, compared with the one thing needful—"to fear God's name."

UNITE MY HEART—suffer it no longer to scatter itself upon a multiplicity of objects, to be drawn hither and thither by a thousand different aims, but turn all its powers, all its affections in one direction, collect them in one focus, make them all one in Thee. The prayer derives a special force from the resolution immediately preceding: "I will walk in Thy truth." The same integrity of heart which made the resolve could alone utter the prayer. The nearest Old Testament parallels are: the "one heart," Jer. xxxii. 39; "And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever:" and the "whole heart" of love to God, Deut. vi. 5, x. 12. Our Lord teaches us how needful the prayer of this verse is. Comp. what He says of "the single eye," the impossibility of serving two masters,

the folly and the wearisomeness of those anxious cares by which men suffer themselves to be hampered and distracted, and in contrast with all this the exhortation, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," &c. (Matt. vi. 19—34.) See also the history of Martha and Mary, Luke x. 38—42.

12. Why does he offer this prayer for a "united heart"? That he may then with his "whole heart" give thanks to God for all His infinite loving-kindness. God's mercies are a motive to greater thankfulness, and to a more whole-hearted undivided service. Briefly, the connection in ver. 11, 12, is this: "Teach me Thy way, (and then) I will walk, &c. Unite my heart, (and then) I will give thanks."

13. Comp. lvii. 10; lvi. 13; cxvi. 8.

THE UNSEEN WORLD BENEATH, *i.e.* under the earth. Comp. Exod. xx. 4, with Phil. ii. 10. For similar phrases see Ezek. xxxi. 14, 16, 18; Ps. lxiii. 9, cxxxix. 15; Ezek. xxvi. 20, xxxii. 18, 24; Is. xlv. 23, and Ps. lxxxviii. 6; Lam. iii. 54.

14. Now at last he comes to the peril, and now (ver. 15) his appeal lies even more fully than in ver. 5 to God's glorious Name by which He made Himself known to Moses, Exod. xxxiv. 6. This verse explains what

- 15 But Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious,  
 Long-suffering and plenteous in loving-kindness and truth.
- 16 O turn unto me, and be gracious to me,  
 Give Thy strength unto Thy servant,  
 And save the son of Thy handmaid.
- 17 Show me a sign for good,  
 That they who hate me may see and be ashamed,  
 Because Thou, Jehovah, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

the peril was, and what he means by the deliverance from Hades. The words are borrowed, with a slight variation ("proud men" instead of "strangers"), from liv. 3.

16. SON OF THY HANDMAID, as in cxvi. 16.

17. A SIGN, *i.e.* not a *miraculous* sign, but an *evident* proof of Thy good-will towards me, such as shall force even my haters to acknowledge that Thou art on my side.

FOR GOOD. Comp. Neh. v. 19, xiii. 31, and often in Jeremiah.

## PSALM LXXXVII.

THIS Psalm presents us with one of those startling contrasts to the general tone of Jewish sentiment and belief which meet us in various passages of the Prophetical writings. The Jewish nation was, even by its original constitution, and still more by the provisions of the Law of Moses, an isolated nation. Shut in by the mountains, the sea, the desert, it was to a great extent cut off from the world. And the narrowness of its spirit corresponded to the narrowness of its geographical position. It was pervaded by a jealous exclusiveness which was remarkable even among the nations of antiquity, and which derived its force and sanction from the precepts of its religion. The Jews were constantly reminded that they were a separate people, distinct, and intended to be distinct, from all others. Their land was given them as a special gift from Heaven. Both they and their

country belonged to God, in a sense in which no other people and country belonged to Him. It was a holy Ark which no profane hands might dare to touch ; or if they did, they must perish in the attempt. As a natural consequence of this belief, the Jewish people, for the most part, regarded their neighbours as enemies. Judaism held out no hope of a brotherhood of nations. The Jewish Church was not a missionary church. So far as the Jews looked upon the world around them, it was with feelings of antipathy, and with the hope, which was never quenched in the midst of the most terrible reverses, that finally they, as the chosen race, should subdue their enemies far and wide, and that, by the grace of Heaven, one sitting on David's throne would be king of the world. Psalmists and Prophets shared the feeling. They exulted in the thought that the king who ruled from Zion would dash the nations in pieces like a potter's vessel, fill the places with dead bodies, and lead rival kings in the long array of his triumph.

But mingling with these anticipations, and correcting them, there were others of a nobler kind. The Prophets speak not only of victories, but of voluntary submission. The vision which rises before them is not only of a forced unity of nations, such as that which was achieved by the iron hand of Roman dominion, but of a unity of faith and love. They see the mountain of the Lord's house exalted above the hills, and all nations, not led thither in the conqueror's train, but flowing to it with one impulse, attracted by its glory, longing to taste its peace (Is. lx. 2—4). They see Gentiles coming to the light of Jerusalem, and kings to the brightness of her rising. They foretell a time when all wars and all national antipathies shall cease, when "the root of Jesse" shall be as a standard round which all nations shall flock, and the temple of Jehovah the centre of a common faith and worship.

It is this last hope which expresses itself in this Psalm, but which expresses itself in a form that has no exact parallel in other passages. Foreign nations are here described, not as captives or tributaries, not even as doing voluntary homage to the greatness and glory of Zion, but as actually incorporated and enrolled, by a new birth, among her sons. Even the worst enemies of their race, the tyrants and oppressors of the Jews, Egypt and Babylon, are threatened with no curse ; no shout of joy is raised in the prospect of their overthrow, but the privileges of citizenship are extended to them, and they are welcomed as brothers. Nay, more, God Himself receives each one as



a child newly-born into His family, acknowledges each as His son, and enrolls him with His own hand in the sacred register of His children.

It is this mode of anticipating a future union and brotherhood of all the nations of the earth, not by conquest, but by incorporation into one state, and by a birthright so acquired, which is so remarkable. In some of the Prophets, more especially in Isaiah, we observe the same liberal, conciliatory, comprehensive language toward foreign states, as Tyre and Ethiopia, and still more strikingly toward Egypt and Assyria (chap. xix. 22—25). But the Psalm stands alone amongst the writings of the Old Testament, in representing this union of nations as a new birth into the city of God.

This idea gives it a singular interest, and clearly stamps it as Messianic. It is the Old Testament expression of the truth which St. Paul declares, when he tells us that in Jesus Christ “there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free;” or when he writes to the Gentile Church at Ephesus, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”

It is the first announcement of that great amity of nations, or rather of that universal common citizenship of which heathen philosophers dreamt, which was “in the mind of Socrates when he called himself a citizen of the world,” which had “become a commonplace of the Stoic philosophy, which Judaism tried finally to realize by the admission of proselytes, through baptism, into the Jewish community; which Rome accomplished, so far as the external semblance went, first by subduing the nations, and then by admitting them to the rights of Roman citizenship. But the true fulfilment of this hope is to be found only in that kingdom which Christ has set up. He has gathered into His commonwealth all the kingdoms of the earth. He has made men one, members of the same family, by teaching them to feel that they are all children of the same Father. He has made it evident that the hope of the Jewish singer is no false hope; that there is a Father in heaven who cares for all, whatever name they bear. Thus the Psalm has received a better and higher fulfilment than that which lies on the surface of its words. It is fulfilled in Christ.

There are two principal epochs to which the Psalm may be referred:—

I. Its tone, as has been already observed, falls in with that of some

of the prophecies of Isaiah. Hence it has been referred, not without reason, to the reign of Hezekiah. Some have supposed that it was a song of triumph, written, like Psalms xli.—xlviii., after the defeat of Sennacherib ; others, more probably, that it was a hymn composed for some solemn reception of proselytes into the Church, “ the Psalmist and his brother Levites exulting in this admission of converts as they would do in a national victory.”

II. Calvin and others refer the Psalm to a time subsequent to the return from the Captivity. It was designed, as Calvin thinks, to console the exiles, whose hearts must have died down within them as they thought of the present enfeebled, impoverished, defenceless state of their city ; who sighed as they looked at their temple, so far inferior in beauty and stateliness, as well as in the imposing splendour of its worship, to the house which their fathers remembered ; and who, dispirited and girt by enemies, needed every encouragement for the future. A study of the earlier chapters of Zechariah, and the later chapters of Isaiah, in connection with this Psalm, may lead us to adopt this view. But our conclusion must depend, to a great extent, on the date which we are disposed to assign to the later chapters of Isaiah (xl.—lxvi.).

The outline of the Psalm is as follows :—

It opens with an outburst of intensely national feeling, celebrating the glory of Zion as the city of God. Ver. 1—3.

But the patriotic sentiment is too large and too grand to suffer any narrow jealousy to interfere with it, and therefore all nations are said to be gathered to her as children to one mother. It lends more force and dignity to this idea, that God Himself appears as the speaker, declaring of one and another, foreign and hostile nations, that their true birthplace is *there*, in Zion. Finally, one brief, obscure verse tells of the joy and happiness of the holy city, welcoming new children on all sides, and making them partakers in her joy. Ver. 7.

[OF THE SONS OF KORAH.\* A PSALM. A SONG.]

I HIS foundation upon the holy mountains doth Jehovah  
love,

1—3. The same deep affection expressed here which are expressed  
and admiration for the holy city are in Psalm xlviii. But there is nothing

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\* See note on Ps. lxxxiv., p. 411.

- 2 (He loveth) the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.
- 3 Glorious things are spoken of thee,  
O city of God ! [Selah.]
- 4 " I will mention Rahab and Babylon among them that know Me ;

in the language employed to lead us to suppose that the city has just escaped from the horrors of war. The "gates" are mentioned, not as part of the fortifications, but as one of the most prominent features of the city—the place of concourse, of judgement, &c.

Every word is emphatic. HIS FOUNDATION, the city and the temple which *He*, Jehovah Himself, hath built ; UPON THE HOLY MOUNTAINS, consecrated by His immediate and manifested Presence : which Jehovah LOVETH, and with a special and distinguishing affection, as compared not only with other nations, but even with other parts of the Holy Land itself.

UPON THE HOLY MOUNTAINS. The plural is used with reference to the mountainous character of the whole country. "Jerusalem was on the ridge, the broadest and most strongly marked ridge of the backbone of the complicated hills which extend through the whole country from the Desert to the plain of Esdraelon."—STANLEY, *Sinai and Palestine*, chap. iii. p. 176. He compares its position in this respect to that of Rome, that "each was situated on its own cluster of steep hills" (p. 175).

3. GLORIOUS THINGS : not earthly splendour or victories, but such a gathering of nations into her bosom as follows in the next verse.

4. I WILL MENTION. The words are the words of God. We have the same abrupt introduction of the Divine Speaker in other Psalms.

Comp. xiv. 4 ; perhaps xxxii. 8 ; lxxv. 2 ; lxxxi. 6 ; and (according to some expositors) lxxxii. 2.

RAHAB. Originally the word denotes pride, ferocity. So in Job ix. 13, "The helpers of pride (*Rahab*) do stoop under him." Possibly even there, and certainly in Job xxvi. 12, it is the name of some fierce monster of the deep, probably the crocodile : "He divideth the sea by His power, And by His understanding He smiteth the proud monster (*Rahab*)." In Ps. lxxxix. 10, there can be no doubt of the reference to Egypt : "Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces," the crocodile of the Nile being there taken as the symbol of that kingdom. So too in Is. li. 9, "Art thou not it that hath cut *Rahab* (i.e. smitten Egypt) and wounded the dragon?" and xxx. 7, "The Egyptians shall help in vain, &c. . . . They are Rahab (proud, mighty, &c.)." The name, then, is applied to Egypt as a vast and formidable power, of which the crocodile might naturally be regarded as a symbol.

AMONG THEM THAT KNOW ME, lit. "as *belonging to* (the number of) them that know Me." The verb to *know* is here used in that deeper and wider sense in which it frequently occurs in Scripture, both of God and of man. Comp. i. 6 (where see note), and xxxvi. 10 ; John x. 14, 15. It is the knowledge of friendship, the knowledge which springs of intimate acquaintance, the knowledge of parent and child.

Lo'Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia :

'This one is born there.'

5 And to Zion it is said :

'One after another is born in her,

And the Most High Himself shall stablish her.'

6 Jehovah shall reckon when He writeth the nations,

'This one is born there.'" [Selah.]

PHILISTIA, TYRE, ETHIOPIA. Of all these nations it shall be said that one and another of them ("this one," as if pointing to them) has become a worshiper of Jehovah, and an adopted citizen of Zion, "born there." With regard to these nations, see the prophecies of Isaiah quoted in the Introduction, and comp. lxviii. 31. THERE, so Zion is designated even before she is named.

5. AND TO ZION, or "of ZION," it is said, ONE AFTER ANOTHER, lit. "man and man," *i.e.* vast multitudes are born in her, as the nations one after another become incorporated as her children. The LXX. here render, not, "it shall be said to Zion," but "Mother Zion shall say," and Zion is spoken of as a mother Is. lxvi. 7, liv. 1-3, lx. 4, 5; but the sense here is different. It is remarkable that the figure of a new birth is used to express the admission of the different nations to the rights of citizenship in Zion.

"Clearly Zion stands in opposition to the countries mentioned before, the one city to the whole of the different countries, the one city of God to all the kingdoms of the world."—*Delitzsch*. These kingdoms one after another lose their population, cease to be kingdoms, whilst their inhabitants all contribute to swell the population of that city which God's own right hand establishes and makes glorious.

6. WHEN JEHOVAH WRITETH, *i.e.* takes a census of the nations (comp. the figure Ezek. xiii. 9, Is. iv. 3, and see note on Ps. lxix. 28), the most glorious thing that He can say of each of them, the crown of all their history, shall be this, not the record of their separate national existence or policy or dominion, but the fact that they have become members by adoption of the city of God. Zion shall be the metropolis of the world.

THIS ONE IS BORN THERE. The words are repeated, as by God Himself, as He enters one after another in the register of His city.

7. The compressed brevity of this verse makes it extremely obscure. There are various interpretations. It may be rendered :—

"Both they that sing and they that dance, All my fountains (of delight), are in thee;" meaning that every source of pleasure, music, singing, &c., was to be found in Zion.

The verse might be arranged thus :—

In *thee* are they that sing and they that dance.

In *thee* are *all* my living springs.

This is abrupt, but still a natural touch of genuine poetic feeling.

Milton, in his paraphrase, gives a similar interpretation :—

7 Both they that sing and they that dance,  
All my fountains, are in thee.

“ Both they who sing and they who  
dance  
With sacred songs are there ;

In thee fresh brooks and soft streams  
glance,  
And all my fountains clear.”

## PSALM LXXXVIII.

THIS is the darkest, saddest Psalm in all the Psalter. It is one wail of sorrow from beginning to end. It is the only Psalm in which the expression of feeling, the pouring out of the burdened heart before God, fails to bring relief and consolation. In every other instance, however heavy the gloom, however oppressed and dejected the spirit of the sufferer, prayer and supplication are mingled with thanksgiving, the accents of lamentation are changed into the notes of triumph, the darkness of midnight gives way to the brightness of faith's morning-dawn. The deeper the sorrow at the opening, the greater the joy at the close. But here the darkness continues to the end. There is no confidence expressed that prayer will be heard, no hope uttered, much less any triumph. The Psalm ends with complaint, as it began. Its last word is “darkness.” One ray of light only struggles through the gloom, one star pierces that thick midnight blackness ; it is the name by which the Psalmist addresses God : “ O God of *my salvation*.”\* That he can address God by that name is a proof that faith and hope are not dead within him ; it is the pledge of his deliverance, though he cannot yet taste its comfort. There is but one such Psalm, as if to teach us that our Father's will concerning us is not to leave us in our dejection, but, in answer to the prayer of faith, to lift us out of it ; there is one, that we may remember that even His truest servants may be called upon “ to walk in darkness

\* Adolph Monod, in “ Les Adieux,” says of this Psalm, “ Le seul Psaume qui soit tout entier dans la douleur.” But in ver. 1, “ O Lord God of my salvation,” he sees “ le germe d'espérance.”

and have no light," that thus they may be the better trained, like a child holding his father's hand in the dark, to trust in the name of the Lord, to stay themselves upon their God."

The older expositors commonly interpreted the Psalm of Christ and His Passion, either in Gethsemane or on the Cross. And our Church has, in a measure, sanctioned this application by appointing this as one of the Psalms for Good Friday.

As to the author, and the circumstances under which the Psalm was written, various conjectures have been made, but they are really worth nothing. One thing only is clear, that it is not a national Psalm, and that it does not deplore the Babylonish captivity, or any other *national* calamity. It is, throughout, personal and individual. Uzziah when smitten with leprosy, Jeremiah in the dungeon, Hezekiah in his sickness, Job in his sufferings—to all these in turn has the authorship of the Psalm been assigned. But neither the thoughts nor the expression of the thoughts favours one of these hypotheses more than another, excepting that, in one or two instances, the language has some affinity with that of the Book of Job, whereas the language of ver. 15, "I am afflicted from my youth up," is, to say the least of it, very exaggerated language in the mouth of any of these persons, and hardly to be justified by any pressure of sorrow.

Delitzsch goes so far as to draw hence the inference, that Heman the Ezrahite was the author of the Book of Job; but the words which he quotes as common to this Psalm and Job are to be found in other places of Scripture: they cannot be called characteristic words, and therefore the argument built upon them falls to the ground.

[A SONG. A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH. FOR THE PRECENTOR.  
"AFTER MACHALATH L'ANNOTH."\* A MASCHIL OF HEMAN THE  
EZRAHITE.†]

- 1 O JEHOVAH, God of my salvation,  
I have cried day and night before Thee.
- 2 Let my prayer come before Thee,  
Incline Thine ear to my cry.

\* To be sung in a sad, mournful tone.

† Heman the Ezrahite, celebrated together with Ethan (to whom the next Psalm is ascribed) for his wisdom, 1 Kings iv. 31. In 1 Chron. vi. 33, 42, both are mentioned as Levitical singers.

- 3 For my soul is full of troubles,  
And my life draweth nigh to the unseen world.
- 4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit,  
I am become as a man that hath no strength,
- 5 Among the dead, cast away,  
Like the slain, lying in the grave,  
Whom Thou rememberest no more,  
But they are cut off from Thy hand.
- 6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,  
In darkness, in the deeps.
- 7 Upon me Thy fury lieth hard,  
And Thou hast afflicted (me) with all Thy waves.  
[Selah.]
- 8 Thou hast removed my familiar friends far from me,

3. The greatness of his affliction, which has brought him to the very edge of the grave, is urged as a reason why God should hear him. Comp. vi. 4, 5; xxx. 3; Is. xxxviii. 10, 11.

IS FULL OF TROUBLES, lit, "is satiated with evils." Comp. cxiii. 4; Lam. iii. 15, 30.

4. THAT HATH NO STRENGTH, *i.e.* not merely as worn out with pain and suffering, which would be an anticlimax, but, as the parallelism shows, like the unsubstantial shadowy phantoms which people the unseen world.

5. CAST AWAY, or as the E. V. "free," *i.e.* left alone, with none to care for me, in that unseen world whence even God's Presence seemed to be withdrawn.

But it is the same strain of feeling which we have already had in vi. 5, xxx. 9, where see notes. His eye is looking down into the darkness; he sees himself already numbered with the dead. But what are the dead? Beings who "know not anything," "clean forgotten, out of mind," beings whom God Himself remembers not. "The

living, the living, he shall praise Thee:" this was the feeling, not of Hezekiah only, but of all the Old Testament saints, in seasons of gloom and despondency. It could not be otherwise till the bright light of Christ's resurrection was cast upon the grave and the world beyond.

6. IN THE LOWEST PIT. See on lxiii. 9, lxxxvi. 13. Comp. Lam. iii. 55, and Ezek. xxvi. 20.

IN THE DEEPS, usually said of the sea, as in lxviii. 22; Exod. xv. 5; here of Hades.

8. THOU HAST REMOVED, as before, "Thou hast laid," &c., thus directly tracing all to God's will and fatherly hand.

MY FAMILIAR FRIENDS. The word expresses close intimate friendship, more than the mere "acquaintance" of the E. V. He is like one shut up in a prison—these cannot come in to him, nor he go forth to them. Delitzsch thinks that, according to Levit. xiii., this sounds like the complaint of a leper, the leprosy moreover being just that death in life

Thou hast made me an abomination unto them ;  
I am shut up, (so that) I cannot go forth.

- 9 Mine eye wasteth away because of affliction ;  
I have called upon Thee, O Jehovah, every day,  
I have stretched forth my hands unto Thee.
- 10 Wilt Thou show wonders unto the dead ?  
Shall the shades below arise and give Thee thanks ?  
[Selah.]
- 11 Shall Thy loving-kindness be told in the grave,  
(Or) Thy faithfulness in destruction ?
- 12 Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark ?  
And Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness ?
- 13 But as for me—unto Thee, O Jehovah, have I cried,  
And in the morning my prayer cometh to meet  
Thee.
- 14 Why, O Jehovah, castest Thou off my soul ?  
(Why) hidest Thou Thy face from me ?

(Numb. xii. 12) which is so pathetically described as the Psalmist's condition.

The cry here is repeated in ver. 18.

AN ABOMINATION, lit. "abominations," the plural intensifying and enlarging the idea. Comp. note on lxviii. 35.

10. ARISE, *i.e.* "rise up," not "rise again from the dead" (comp. lxxxviii. 5). The language refers to what takes place in the unseen world, not at the resurrection. Comp. Is. xiv. 9.

The expostulation is like that of Job: "If a man die, shall he live again?" There is no question of the general resurrection, but only the improbability that God should restore to life one who was already dead. Calvin observes that "this state of feeling cannot be excused, inasmuch as it is not for us to prescribe to God when He shall give us succour; for

we wrong His power, if we are not assured that it is as easy for Him to restore life to the dead as to prevent and avert the last extremity. And of a truth the constancy of the saints has ever shown some traces of the weakness of the flesh, so that God's fatherly indulgence has had to make allowance for the defects which are mingled even with their very virtues."

13. BUT AS FOR ME, emphatic; though thus at the very edge of death, though bowed down with the heavy load of affliction, still I look to Thee. This unwearied "continuing instant in prayer" is the victory of faith in the midst of trials which, but for this, would end in despair. It had been one lifelong suffering *from his youth up*, yet still his earnest pleading had never ceased. Such prayers are those "unutterable groanings" of which St. Paul speaks.



- 15 I am afflicted, and ready to die : from my youth up,  
 I have suffered Thy terrors (till) I am distracted.  
 16 Over me Thy fierce wrath hath passed ;  
 Thy horrors have cut me off.  
 17 They have compassed me like waters all the day,  
 They have come round about me together.  
 18 Thou hast removed lover and friend far from me,  
 My familiar friends are—darkness.

16. THY HORRORS : a frequent expression in the Book of Job, vi. 4 ; ix. 34 ; xiii. 21, &c.

18. DARKNESS, lit. "the place of darkness," the dark kingdom of the dead, is now all I have to look to, instead of friends, or, as we might say, The grave is now my only friend. Similar expressions occur in Prov. vii. 4, and in Job xvii. 14 : "I have said

to the grave, Thou art my father," &c. "The Psalm ends with an energetic expression of its main thought—the immediate vicinity of death. The darkness is thickest at the end, just as it is in the morning before the rising of the sun."—*Hengstenberg*. But here, at least, the sun does not rise.

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## PSALM LXXXIX.

THERE can be little doubt that this Psalm was written in the latter days of the Jewish monarchy, when the throne of David had fallen, or was already tottering to its fall, and when the prospect for the future was so dark that it seemed as if God had forgotten His covenant and His promise. Tholuck's conjecture is not improbable, that the king of whom the Psalm speaks (ver. 45) is the youthful Jehoiachin, who after a reign of three months was deposed and imprisoned by Nebuchadnezzar, and of whom it was said, that no man of his seed should "prosper, sitting on the throne of David." The lamentation over him in Jeremiah xxii. 24—29, may be taken as evidence that he was beloved by his subjects, and the Prophet and the Psalmist indulge in a similar strain as they behold the last hope of David's house perish.

There is no reason to conclude from ver. 47, that the king himself is the author of the Psalm (see note there); and from ver. 18, indeed, the contrary may perhaps be inferred.

The Psalm opens by a reference to the Promise given to David, 2 Sam. vii. 8, &c. This Promise, and the attributes of God on which the Promise rests, and which are the great pledge of its fulfilment, form the subject of the poet's grateful acknowledgement, before he passes to the mournful contrast presented by the ruin of the house of David, and the blighting of his people's hopes. He turns to the glorious past, that by its aid he may rise out of the grief and discouragement of the present. He takes the Promise, and turns it into a song. He dwells upon it, and lingers over it. He dwells on that which is the ground and pillar of the Promise—the faithfulness of God—and then he first lifts his loud lament over the disasters which have befallen his king and people, speaking out his disappointment, till his words sound like a reproach; and next pleads earnestly with God that He would not suffer His enemies to triumph.

Certain words and thoughts run through the Psalm, and give it a marked character. Such are, especially, the constant reference to the "faithfulness of God," in confirming His covenant and promise, ver. 1, 2, 5, 8, 14, 24, 33, 49 (comp. also the use of the participle "faithful," ver. 28, 37); the phrase "I will not lie," ver. 33, 35; "I have sworn," ver. 3, 35, 49; and the "covenant," ver. 3, 28, 34, 39.

[A MASCHIL OF ETHAN THE EZRAHITE.\*]

I I WILL for ever sing of the loving-kindnesses of Jehovah,  
I will make known Thy faithfulness with my mouth  
to all generations.

1, 2. The loving-kindness and the faithfulness of Jehovah are the source of the Promise. We are led to the source, that thence we may track the stream.

1. FOR EVER. The position of these words before the verb has been supposed to indicate that the Psalmist

is not speaking in his own name, but in the name of the Church which abideth "ever." But they may refer to the everlasting continuance of God's love and faithfulness, as pledged to David and his seed.

LOVING-KINDNESSES, plural, as in Is. lv. 3, "the sure mercies [faithful

\* See note on Ps. lxxxviii.

- 2 For I have said, For ever shall loving-kindness be built up,  
In the heavens shalt Thou establish Thy faithfulness.
- 3 "I have made a covenant with My chosen,  
I have sworn unto David My servant ;
- 4 For ever will I establish thy seed,  
And build up thy throne to all generations." [Selah.]
- 5 And the heavens shall praise Thy wondrousness, O  
Jehovah,  
Thy faithfulness also, in the assembly of the holy ones.
- 6 For who in the sky can be compared with Jehovah,  
(Who) is like unto Jehovah among the sons of the  
mighty ?
- 7 A God very terrible in the council of the holy ones,

loving-kindnesses] of David." For the same union of these two attributes of God, see xxxvi. 5.

2. FOR I HAVE SAID, *i.e.* this is the conviction whence springs the resolve in ver. 1.

BE BUILT UP, like some stately palace, rising even greater and fairer, stone by stone, before the wondering eyes of men, knowing no decay, never destined to fall into ruin.

IN THE HEAVENS, lit. "As for the heavens, Thou shalt establish Thy faithfulness in them." The heavens are the type of unchangeableness and perpetuity, as compared with the restless vicissitudes, the ever-shifting shows of earth. Comp. cxix. 89.

3, 4. These are the words of God, the sum of His promise as given in 2 Sam. vii. They are introduced with remarkable abruptness, standing alone in their forcible brevity, whilst the Psalmist passes on to celebrate at length the might and faithfulness of the Promiser. In the 19th verse he returns to the promise, and then expands and dwells upon it.

Most of the expressions, "David My servant," "establish," "for ever," "build," the parallelism of "seed" and "throne," "My chosen," are

taken, either directly or indirectly, from the original passage in 2 Sam.

5. At first sight the passage which follows to ver. 18 appears to break the train of thought. But the object of the Psalmist is to place in the strongest light those attributes of God on which the *fulfilment* of His Promise depends. For "in a promise everything depends upon the person who promises. The question therefore occurs, Has he the will and the power to fulfil the promise?"—*Hengstenberg*. Hence the Psalmist dwells first upon God's power as exhibited and confessed in creation, then upon His righteousness, goodness, and truth, as manifested especially to His people, of whom and of whose king He is the protector.

THY WONDROUSNESS (lit. wonder) : not "Thy wondrous works," but "Thy wonderful mysterious nature and being," as separate and distinct from that of all created beings. The word occurs in Is. ix. 6, as one of the names of Messiah (comp. also Judg. xiii. 18).

ASSEMBLY OF THE HOLY ONES, *i.e.* the angels, to which corresponds in the next verse, "the sons of the mighty ;" comp. xxix. 1. They are

And to be feared above all them that are round  
about Him?

8 O Jehovah, God of Hosts,

Who is mighty as Thou, O Jah !

And Thy faithfulness is round about Thee.

9 THOU rulest the pride of the sea ;

When the waves thereof arise, THOU stillest them.

10 THOU hast crushed Rahab, as one that is slain ;

With Thy mighty arm Thou hast scattered Thine  
enemies.

11 Thine are (the) heavens, Thine also is the earth ;

THOU hast founded the world and the fulness thereof.

12 THOU hast created the north and the south,

Tabor and Hermon shout for joy in Thy Name.

called an "assembly," or "congregation," as the church above, which, like the church below, worships and praises God. In this second clause the verb must be repeated from the first: "Thy faithfulness also is praised," &c.

8. AND THY FAITHFULNESS. Or as Ewald: "And what faithfulness is like Thy faithfulness," &c.

ROUND ABOUT THEE, God's attributes being personified, as in ver. 14 and lxxxv. 13. Then follow proofs and instances, first, of God's might, ver. 9-13, and then of His faithfulness, ver. 14-18.

10. RAHAB ; here probably, as in lxxxvii. 4 (where see note) a name of Egypt. God's power as ruling the sea would naturally be connected in the Psalmist's mind with that great manifestation of His power in the deliverance from Egypt. Compare the same association of ideas in lxxiv. 13-17. Others take the word in the more general sense of *pride* (i.e. our proud foes), as in Job ix. 13, xxvi. 12. In the context of both passages in Job, God's power over the sea is magnified, but the Book is too far removed from the circle of Israelitish

history to allow of our seeing any reference there to the passage of the Red Sea.

AS ONE THAT IS SLAIN. The particle of comparison must not be pressed. The sense is: "Thou hast crushed Egypt, so that it lies fallen like one who has received a deadly wound."

11. THOU HAST FOUNDED, &c. : lit. "As for the world and the fulness thereof, Thou hast founded them." And so in the next verse: "The north and the south, Thou hast created them."

12. TABOR AND HERMON do not denote merely the West and East, as most interpreters explain. They are mentioned rather as conspicuous mountains in a mountain land. Tabor, "remarkable for the verdure, which climbs—a rare sight in Eastern scenery—to its very summit" (STANLEY, *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 350); Hermon, as its name imports, "the lofty prominent peak," crowned with snow, the most striking of all the mountains of Palestine, are fit representatives of the whole country; open, as it were, the loud hymn of praise. See lxxii. 3; xcvi. 8.

- 13 Thine is an arm (clothed) with might,  
Strong is Thy hand, high is Thy right hand.
- 14 Righteousness and judgement are the pillars of Thy throne,  
Loving-kindness and Truth go to meet Thy face.
- 15 Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound,  
That walk, O Jehovah, in the light of Thy countenance.
- 16 In Thy name do they exult all the day,  
And in Thy righteousness are they exalted.
- 17 For THOU art the glory of their might,  
And in Thy favour our horn is exalted ;
- 18 For to Jehovah belongeth our shield,  
And to the Holy One of Israel our king.
- 19 Then Thou spakest in vision to Thy beloved and saidst,  
"I have laid help upon a mighty man,

14. PILLARS, or perhaps as others, "basis, foundation."

15—18. Such is the God, so full of majesty and power, who has given the promise. Blessed, therefore, are the people who have Jehovah for their God. They may well rejoice in their privilege.

15. THE JOYFUL SOUND, *i.e.* the loud music of trumpets, &c., in the festivals, especially on the New Year's Day, Lev. xxiii. 24, or on extraordinary occasions, Numb. x. 1—10, xxiii. 21 ; Josh. vi. 5, 20, &c. See on xxvii. 6 ; lxxxi. 1. This Israel only knows, because Israel only is the people of God. They are blessed, because they, and they only, of all nations, can keep these solemn feasts to His praise.

18. OUR SHIELD, *i.e.* as is evident from the parallelism, the king. Comp. xlvii. 10. The rendering, "Jehovah is our shield," is against grammar.

19. The mention of the king in the preceding verse leads now to the resumption and expansion of the pro-

mise given to David. The two aspects of God's relation to David and his house and kingdom are herein presented to us, an outward and an inward, corresponding to the two great attributes of God which are praised in ver. 1—18 ; His omnipotence and His faithfulness. To the first of these belong : (a) David's exaltation to the throne, ver. 19 ; (b) God's constant aid, and hence his victory over his foes, ver. 21—23, and extended dominion, ver. 24, 25. To the second, which is the most prominent, God's fatherly relation to David's seed, which is shown in (a) the exaltation to the dignity of a son, who is also the first-born, and therefore holds the pre-eminence above all kings, ver. 26, 27 ; accordingly (b) an *everlasting* covenant made with him and his seed, and an everlasting kingdom, ver. 28, 29 ; hence, too, (c) the transgressions of his sons are visited, indeed, with a fatherly chastisement, ver. 30—32, but cannot make the covenant void, ver. 33, 34 ; (d) and the assurance is finally repeated, that

- I have exalted one chosen out of the people.  
 20 I have found David My servant,  
     With My holy oil have I anointed him ;  
 21 With whom My hand shall be established ;  
     Mine arm also shall strengthen him.  
 22 No enemy shall exact upon him,  
     No son of wickedness shall afflict him.  
 23 And I will beat down his adversaries before his face,  
     And plague them that hate him ;  
 24 And My faithfulness and My loving-kindness shall be  
     with him,  
     And in My Name shall his horn be exalted ;  
 25 And I will set his hand on the sea,  
     And his right hand on the rivers.  
 26 He shall call Me ' THOU art my Father,  
     My God, and the Rock of my salvation.'  
 27 Also I will make him My first-born,  
     Highest of the kings of the earth.  
 28 For ever will I keep for him My loving-kindness,  
     And My covenant is faithful with him.  
 29 And I will make his seed (to endure) for ever,  
     And his throne as the days of heaven.  
 30 If his children forsake My law,  
     And walk not in My judgements,

this covenant which God has once confirmed by an oath, cannot lie, and that therefore the seed as well as the throne of David must endure as the very heavens.

THEN, referring to the time when the promise was given.

THY BELOVED. On this word see note on xvi. 10. David is evidently meant, though the revelation was made in vision, not to him, but to Nathan (2 Sam. vii. 4, 17).

A MIGHTY MAN. Comp. 2 Sam. xvii. 10.

22. SON OF WICKEDNESS. Th's clause is taken verbatim from the words of the promise in 2 Sam. vii. 10.

25. THE SEA . . . THE RIVERS, *i.e.* the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates, with reference, no doubt, to the extent of Solomon's dominion. See above on lxxx. 11. Or the range of hope may be wider, as in lxxii. 8. The plural "rivers" is in accordance with poetic usage, and need not be explained of the Euphrates and its separate channels, or the Euphrates and Tigris, &c.

27. MY FIRST-BORN. As he calls Me "Father," so I not only acknowledge him as My son, but as My first-born, and therefore My heir. (So Israel is called the first-born, Exod. iv. 22, and Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 9.)

30. There follows a paraphrase of

- 31 If they profane My statutes,  
And keep not My commandments,  
32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod,  
And their iniquity with stripes.  
33 But My loving-kindness will I not break off from him,  
Nor suffer My faithfulness to fail.  
34 I will not profane My covenant,  
Nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips;  
35 Once have I sworn by My holiness,  
I will not lie unto David.  
36 His seed shall be for ever,  
And his throne as the sun before Me.  
37 He shall be established for ever as the moon,  
And as the faithful witness in heaven."  
38 But THOU hast cut off, and rejected,  
Thou hast been wroth with Thine anointed.

2 Sam. vii. 14. The chastisement is a necessary part of the paternal relationship, Heb. xii. The sins of individuals will be punished by God's fatherly correction, but the covenant cannot cease, the promises made to the seed as a whole cannot be withdrawn. Their unfaithfulness cannot make the faithfulness of God of none effect (Rom. iii. 3). But see, as presenting a different view, 1 Kings viii. 25.

32. THE ROD . . . STRIPES. In 2 Sam. vii. qualifying expressions are added: "rod of men," "stripes of the children of men:" not meaning "such punishments as all men, because all are sinners, are exposed to;" but either (1) chastisements such as men (comp. for similar phraseology Hos. vi. 7, Job xxxi. 33), human fathers, employ for the correction, not the destruction of their children; "for what son is there whom the father chasteneth not?" or (2) chastisement fitted to the measure of man's endurance (comp. 1 Cor. x. 13).

35. ONCE, *i.e.* "once for all."  
BY MY HOLINESS, as in Amos iv. 2.

37. THE FAITHFUL WITNESS. This, according to the parallelism, must be "the moon." Luther and others have supposed the rainbow to be meant. Others, again, think that the witness is God himself, and render, "And a faithful witness is in heaven." But the moon is more for certain seasons than any other orb: in all countries she has been the arbiter of festivals.

38. But now comes the mournful contrast. This covenant, made by the almighty and all-faithful God, confirmed and ratified by an oath, eternal as the heavens are eternal, sure as the order of the Universe is sure—what has become of it? Has it not failed, or is it not in danger of failing? Appearances are against its perpetuity, against the truth of God. The expostulation of the Psalmist is nothing less than a reproach. God has with His own hand cast down the throne

- 39 Thou hast made void the covenant of Thy servant,  
 Thou hast profaned his crown (by casting it) to the  
 ground.
- 40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges,  
 Thou hast made his strongholds a ruin.
- 41 All they that pass by the way have spoiled him,  
 He is become a reproach to his neighbours.
- 42 Thou hast exalted the right hand of his adversaries,  
 Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.
- 43 Also Thou turnest the edge of his sword,  
 And hast not made him to stand in the battle.
- 44 Thou hast made his glory to cease,  
 And hast cast his throne down to the ground ;
- 45 Thou hast shortened the days of his youth,  
 Thou hast covered him with shame. [Selah.]
- 46 How long, O Jehovah, wilt Thou hide Thyself, for  
 ever ?  
 Shall Thy fury burn like fire ?

of David, and annulled the covenant : so it seems to one who measures promise and performance by a human standard.

The boldness of the expostulation has scandalized the Jewish interpreters. Aben Ezra tells the story of a wise and pious Jew in Spain, who would never read nor listen to this Psalm, and he and others would get rid of the offence by taking ver. 38—45 as expressing the scoff of enemies, not the reproach of the Psalmist. But see the exactly similar language in xlv. 9—22, and notes there.

40. HIS HEDGES. The pronouns in this and the next verse refer grammatically to the king, but in sense to the people, who are regarded as one with their monarch. The expressions are borrowed from lxxx. 12.

44 GLORY, lit. "purity," and thus "splendour," "majesty," and the like.

45. THOU HAST SHORTENED, &c. This has been explained by Grotius and others of the short reigns of the later sovereigns of Judea. But if spoken of an individual monarch, the expression would naturally mean that he had grown old before his time ; comp. Hos. vii. 9 : if of the family of David, it would be a figure denoting its failing strength before it attained to the glory and dominion promised.

46. The transition from expostulation to pleading ; which of itself shows how the expostulation is to be understood. It is human weakness discovering to God its inmost heart. There *is* a sense of wrong, and the true man says that he feels it, speaks it out, and asks God to set it right. It is an example of the perpetual clash between convictions and facts. See Hab. i. 2, 3.

The pleading consists of two parts, each comprised in three verses. The



- 47 O remember how short a time I have to live!  
 For what vanity hast Thou created all the sons of men!
- 48 What man is he that liveth and shall not see death,  
 That can deliver his soul from the hand of the unseen world? [Selah.]
- 49 Lord, where are Thy former loving-kindnesses,  
 Which Thou swarest unto David in Thy faithfulness?
- 50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of Thy servants,  
 How I bear in my bosom [the reproach of] many peoples,
- 51 Wherewith Thine enemies have reproached Thee, O Jehovah,  
 Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of Thine anointed.
- 
- 52 Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

argument of the first is the shortness of human life; that of the second, the dishonour cast upon God by the triumph of His enemies.

HOW LONG . . . FOR EVER. See note on xiii. 1, and comp. lxxix. 5.

47. HOW SHORT A TIME: a frequent ground of appeal to God's forbearing mercy, xxxix. 5; Job vii. 6, xiv. 1, &c.

For the sentiment in this and the two following verses, see note on lxxxviii. 10. The occurrence of the pronoun of the first person singular can only be explained by its being intended to describe a fact of common experience, for in ver. 17, 18 the people speak in the first person *plural*, and the Anointed is always spoken of in the third person. The "I" is the expression of personal feeling, measuring others by itself. Or ver. 47-49 may mean, "Let *me*, even *me*, see Thy restoring love."

49. FORMER LOVING-KINDNESSES; not the promise itself, but the mani-

fold proof of its fulfilment in past times.

50. I BEAR IN MY BOSOM. The phrase elsewhere signifies "cherishing with tender care and affection." It is here rather the expression of an intense sympathy with the Anointed as the representative of Jehovah, and is urged as a plea why God's faithfulness should be vindicated.

51. FOOTSTEPS, *i.e.* as we might say, "every step he takes." Comp. xvii. 11; xxii. 16; xlix. 5. The Targum interprets this as a reproach, because of the *tarrying* of the footsteps of the Messiah. And so Kimchi: "He delays so long in coming, that they say he will never come." Thus ends the Third Book of the Psalter, like the First and Second, with a Messianic Psalm.

52. The Doxology is no part of the original Psalm, but was added subsequently, to mark the close of the Book.



# THE PSALMS.



## BOOK IV.

PSALMS XC.—CVI.



## PSALM XC.

"THE 90th Psalm," says Isaac Taylor, "might be cited as perhaps the most sublime of human compositions, the deepest in feeling, the loftiest in theologic conception, the most magnificent in its imagery. True is it in its report of human life as troubled, transitory, and sinful. True in its conception of the Eternal,—the Sovereign and the Judge, and yet the refuge and the hope of men, who, notwithstanding the most severe trials of their faith, lose not their confidence in Him ; but who, in the firmness of faith, pray for, as if they were predicting, a near-at-hand season of refreshment. Wrapped, one might say, in mystery, until the distant day of revelation should come, there is here conveyed the doctrine of Immortality : for in this very plaint of the brevity of the life of man, and of the sadness of these his few years of trouble, and their brevity and their gloom, there is brought into contrast the Divine immutability ; and yet it is in terms of a submissive piety : the thought of a life eternal is here in embryo. No taint is there in this Psalm of the pride and petulance, the half-uttered blasphemy, the malign disputing or arraignment of the justice or goodness of God, which have so often shed a venomous colour upon the language of those who have writhed in anguish, personal or relative. There are few, probably, among those who have passed through times of bitter and distracting woe, or who have stood the helpless spectators of the miseries of others, that have not fallen into moods of mind violently in contrast with the devout and hopeful melancholy which breathes throughout this Ode. Rightly attributed to the Hebrew Lawgiver or not, it bespeaks its remote antiquity, not merely by the majestic simplicity of its style, but negatively by the entire avoidance of those sophisticated turns of thought which belong to a late—a lost age, in a people's intellectual and moral history. This Psalm, undoubtedly, is centuries older than the moralizing of that time, when the Jewish mind had listened to what it could never bring into a true assimilation with its own mind—the abstractions of the Greek Philosophy."—*Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry*, pp. 161-3.

“There are important *internal* reasons,” says Hengstenberg, “which may be urged in favour of the composition of the Psalm by Moses, as announced in the title. The poem bears throughout the stamp of high antiquity; \* there is no other Psalm which so decidedly conveys the impression of being the original expression of the feelings to which it gives utterance. There is, moreover, no other Psalm which stands so much *by itself*, and for which parallel passages furnish so little kindred matter in its characteristic peculiarities. On the other hand, there occurs a series of striking allusions to the Pentateuch, especially to the poetical passages, and above all others to Deut. xxxii., allusions which are of a different kind from those which occur in other passages in the Psalms, and which do not appear, like them, to be *borrowed*. Luther remarks in the Psalm another peculiarity: ‘Just as Moses acts in teaching the law, so does he in this prayer. For he preaches death, sin, and condemnation, in order that he may alarm the proud who are secure in their sins, and that he may set before their eyes their sin and evil, concealing, hiding nothing.’ The strong prominence given to the doctrine of *death as the wages of sin* is characteristic of the Psalm, a doctrine of not frequent occurrence in Holy Scripture, and especially not in the Psalms, and which is proclaimed as distinctly and impressively as it is here only in the Pentateuch, Gen. ii., iii., and in those ordinances of the ceremonial law which threaten death.”

The points of resemblance between the language of the Psalm and expressions occurring in parts of the Pentateuch, and more particularly in Deuteronomy, will be found mentioned in the notes. To those who believe, as I do, that Deuteronomy was written by Moses, they furnish an argument for the Mosaic authorship of the Psalm.

“This Psalm, then, is one of the oldest of the inspired utterances. It is the prayer which is read over the mortal dust of some hundreds of the children of men, every week, in London alone. And so used, none of us finds it antiquated. The lapse of 3,000 years has not made it necessary to discard this clause and that. Words that described the relation of the children of Israel to the eternal God, serve still to express the devotion of English hearts turning to God in their sorrow. As these grand words are uttered, the curtain that hangs round our life seems to draw back, and we see, beyond, depths that we dreamt not of. From time and the slow succession of events,

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\* So Herder calls it “that ancient Psalm, that hymn of eternity.”

from the minutes and the hours that seem so long and so many, we turn to God, whose eternal nature was as it now is even when the world was formed, and to whom a thousand years are no more than the middle watch of the night is to a sound sleeper. Nations that seem established for ever are carried off down the roaring cataract of time ; men full of pride, and glory, and power, grow and perish like grass ; and God alone remains unchangeable—the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”—ARCHBISHOP OF YORK’S *Sermons preached at Lincoln’s Inn*, p. 2.

The Psalm has no strophical division, nor even any regular rhythmical arrangement. It consists of two principal parts :—

I. The first is a meditation on the Eternity of God, as it stands in contrast with the weakness and transitoriness of man (ver. 1—12) ; and here we have, first, the contrast stated (ver. 1—6), and then the reason of this transitoriness, viz. man’s sin, and God’s wrath as following thereon, together with the prayer for wisdom to turn to a practical account these facts of human life (ver. 7—12).

II. The second (ver. 13—17) is a prayer that God—who, notwithstanding Israel’s sin, and notwithstanding the chastisement that sin has provoked, is still Israel’s Home and Refuge—would now at last have compassion upon His people, give them joy for sorrow (ver. 13—15), and crown all their labours with success (ver 16, 17).

[A PRAYER OF MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.]

I LORD, Thou hast been our dwelling-place  
In all generations.

Ver. 1—6. The eternity and unchangeableness of God contrasted with the transitoriness of man.

I. THOU HAST BEEN, or “hast proved Thyself to be.” It is the record of a past experience, not merely the statement of what God is in His own nature. It is the acknowledgement of what God has been to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, when they had no fixed dwelling-place, but “confessed that they were strangers and

pilgrims,” of what He had been both to their fathers and to themselves.

OUR DWELLING-PLACE, or “a place of refuge for us.” The word, which occurs Deut. xxxiii. 27, combines both ideas, and would have a peculiar force of meaning for the Israelites in the wilderness. For Israel was without a country and without a home, finding here and there only a brief resting-place beside the well and under the palms of the

- 2 Before the mountains were brought forth,  
Or ever Thou gavest birth to the earth and the world,  
Yea from everlasting to everlasting, Thou (art) God.
- 3 Thou turnest frail man to dust,  
And sayest : Return, ye children of men.
- 4 For a thousand years in Thy sight  
Are (but) as yesterday, when it passeth,  
And (as) a watch in the night.

desert. And Israel was without a *refuge*, exposed to enemies and a thousand perils.

IN ALL GENERATIONS, lit. "in generation and generation," a phrase which occurs Deut. xxxii. 7.

2. THOU GAVEST BIRTH TO. "Or ever the earth and the world were formed."

EARTH . . . WORLD. The former is the more common and general word ; the latter, which is exclusively used in poetry, denotes, according to its etymology, the *fruitful* earth (comp. Prov. viii. 31 ; Job xxxvii. 12).

3. TO DUST : lit. "to the state of one who is crushed, reduced to dust," with allusion, no doubt, to Gen. iii. 19.

RETURN. As men perish by the breath of God, so by His word He calls others into being : "one generation goeth, and another cometh." Such is probably the meaning. Some suppose the second clause of the verse to be merely a repetition of the first :

"Thou turnest men to destruction,  
And sayest, Turn (*i.e.* to destruction), ye children of men."

But if an emphatic repetition were designed, the form of the sentence would rather have been :

"Thou sayest, Turn to destruction,  
ye children of men,  
And they are turned."

4. YESTERDAY. To a Jew, the new day began in the evening. . . .

A WATCH IN THE NIGHT. The night was anciently divided into three, later into four watches. There is a climax ; for the past day, short as it seems, was, whilst it was passing, capable of measurement : it had its hours and its minutes, its thoughts and its acts, and its memories. But the night-watch "is for us as though it were not ; we sleep through the watch of the night, living but observing nothing." "In those words, 'a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday,' &c., the Psalmist has thrown a light upon the nature of God such as a volume of reasoning could not have kindled. With God there are no measures of time. With us time is the name we give to the duration of a certain succession of thoughts and efforts, each of which for a moment held full possession of us, each of which cost us a certain pain, and contributed a little to that weariness which at last took shelter in repose. The Most High does not and cannot so govern the world. He does not look away from the earth to add fuel to the sun ; He does not leave one nation of the earth neglected whilst He works mighty social changes in another. . . . All that we mean by time must now be left out of the account. . . . It would be a longer



5 Thou sweepest them away (as with a flood); they are  
(as) a sleep :

In the morning they are as grass which springeth afresh.

6 In the morning it flourisheth and springeth afresh,

In the evening it is cut down and withereth.

7 For we have been consumed by Thine anger,

And by Thy fury have we been terrified ;

8 Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee,

Our secret (sins) in the light of Thy countenance.

9 For all our days have passed away in Thy wrath,

We have spent our years as a thought :

and more tedious task, if a man were the worker, to build a world than to guide a wayward nation through its fortunes : but what means longer or shorter, where there is no labour, nor waiting, nor weariness, but only the streaming forth of an omnipotent will ? Dare we say that it cost more to construct the universe than to guide the footsteps of one man during the short year that has just closed !"—ARCHBISHOP OF YORK'S *Sermons*, pp. 6—8.

The sentiment of the verse is repeated by St. Peter, who gives also the converse, 2 Pet. iii. 8.

5. THOU SWEEPEST, &c. Or the two clauses may be dependent upon one another, as in the P.B.V. : "As soon as Thou hast swept them away, they are (or, become) as a sleep."

IN THE MORNING. This can hardly mean "in early youth," as some of the Rabbis explain. The words, strictly speaking, are a part of the comparison ("they are as grass which springeth afresh in the morning"), and are only thus placed first to give emphasis to the figure. In the East, one night's rain works a change as if by magic. The field at evening was brown, parched, arid as a desert : in the morning it is green with the blades of grass. The scorch-

ing hot wind (James i. 11) blows upon it, and again before evening it is withered.

6. IT IS CUT DOWN. Others render : "It is dried up." The P.B.V. gives both meanings : "it is *cut down*, *dried up*, and withered."

8. OUR SECRET (SINS), or, "our secret (heart) ;" for the word is singular. The whole inner being, that which is in man (John ii. 25), the pollution and sinfulness of which is hidden from a man himself, till it is set in the light of God's countenance.

LIGHT, or more properly, "luminary." The light of God's countenance is everywhere else spoken of as a light of love and approbation. (Hence, the Syriac renders the second clause "make us grow young again in the light of Thy countenance." Here it is a revealing light. The "light" or rather "sun" of God's countenance shines down into the dark abysses of the human heart, bringing out its hidden evils into strong and painful relief. The nearest parallel expression occurs in Prov. xv. 30, where the same word is used, rendered in the E.V. "the *light* of the eyes." It means "that which contains and gives the light, as the sun, a lamp, &c."

- 10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten,  
 Or (perchance) by reason of strength, fourscore  
 years;  
 And their pride is (but) labour and vanity,  
 For it hath past swiftly, and we have fled away.
- 11 Who knoweth the might of Thine anger,  
 And Thy wrath, according to the fear that is due  
 unto Thee?
- 12 So teach us to number our days,  
 That we may gain a heart of wisdom.
- 13 Return, O Jehovah!—how long?—  
 And let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants.

9. AS A THOUGHT. The same comparison is found in Homer, as an emblem of speed: *ὡσεὶ πτερόν ἢ ῥύμα*.

10. THE DAYS OF OUR YEARS (a common expression in Genesis). The literal rendering of this clause is, "as for the days of our years in them are seventy years."

OR (PERCHANCE). More literally, "or if they (the years) be with fullness of strength."

THEIR PRIDE (the word occurs only here), *i.e.* the pride of the years, meaning all in which men make their boast, as health, strength, honour, riches, &c.

FOR IT HATH PAST, &c. Words which come with double force from the lips of one now standing himself on the extreme verge of life, and looking back on the past. Comp. the language of St. John, "The world passeth away and the lust thereof," &c.

11. WHO KNOWETH, *i.e.* "regard-eth, considereth aright."

12. TEACH US, lit. "To number our days, *so* teach us," *i.e.* in this manner teach us, give us this kind of instruction. The position of the words and the accents justify this

interpretation. Others take *so* in the sense of *accordingly*. And others again connect it with what goes before: "*So*, *i.e.* according to the fear due unto Thee."

THAT WE MAY GAIN, gather, bring in as a harvest, the fruit of the earth, &c.: a heart of wisdom, a wise heart is the fruit which we are to gather from the Divine instruction.

13. The prayer which follows springs from the deep source of the preceding meditation. God is everlasting, man transitory and sinful. Man does not consider his sin aright, even when God lays His hand upon him. He needs Divine instruction that he may take to heart the lesson both of his sinfulness and his transitoriness. But Moses does not forget that, in spite of all, God has been and still is the home of His people. He is a compassionate God, as well as a God that punisheth transgression. And therefore he asks not only that he and his people may learn the lesson of Divine wisdom, but that the God who had chastened them would visit them with His loving-kindness, that the night of sorrow may flee away, and the morning of gladness dawn. God's love, God's

- 14 O satisfy us in the morning with Thy loving-kindness,  
That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.  
15 Make us glad according to the days in which Thou  
hast afflicted us,  
The years wherein we have seen evil.  
16 Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants,  
And Thy majesty upon their children.  
17 And let the graciousness of Jehovah our God be upon  
us;  
And the work of our hands do Thou establish upon  
us;  
Yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.

personal manifestation of Himself, His blessing descending upon them as they enter upon their new life in the promised inheritance,—for this, and not for anything less, he prays. “And the prayer is a presage of the end of their pilgrimage, and of their forgiveness, and their settlement in the land that God had given them.”

RETURN. This may mean, as in Exod. xxxii. 12, “Turn from Thine anger,” or, as in Ps. vi. 4, “Turn to Thy people.”

HOW LONG. See notes on vi. 3, 4.

LET IT REPENT THEE, or, “show compassion towards.” The fuller expression is found in Ex. xxxii. 12, “Let it repent Thee of the evil,” &c. The phrase occurs frequently in the Prophets.

14. IN THE MORNING, when the night of sorrow is spent. Comp. xli. 5, cxliii. 8.

15. AFFLICTED US, or “humbled us,” the same word which is used in

Deut. viii. 2, where this “humbling” is said to have been God’s purpose in those forty years’ wandering.

16. THY WORK. The word is used both of God’s judgements and of His acts of grace. Comp. lxxvii. 12, xcii. 4, xcv. 9, and Hab. iii. 2. Here the bringing of Israel into his inheritance is meant.

UPON, as coming down out of heaven, and so descending *upon*.

17. GRACIOUSNESS. This is probably a better rendering than “beauty,” which I have retained in xxvii. 4.

THE WORK OF OUR HANDS, another expression which runs all through Deuteronomy.

The order deserves notice. *God’s* work is first to appear, His majesty to be revealed; then *man’s* work, which is God’s work carried out by human instruments, may look for His blessing.

## PSALM XCI.

THIS Psalm, which in the Hebrew has no inscription, is by the LXX., apparently without sufficient reason, ascribed to David. It celebrates, with considerable variety and beauty of expression, God's loving and watchful care, and the perfect peace and security of those who make Him their refuge.

There is no reason to suppose that the Psalm was written during the prevalence of a pestilence (such for instance as that mentioned in 2 Sam. xxiv. 15)\*, for the variety of figures employed shows that the Psalmist is thinking of peril of every kind, coming from whatever source, and that he paints all dangers and fears vividly to the eye of his mind, in order to express the more joyfully his confidence that none of these things can move him, that over all he is more than conqueror. It is St. Paul's fervid exclamation, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" expressed in rich and varied poetry.

- 1 HE that sitteth in the secret place of the Most High,  
That resteth under the shadow of the Almighty,
- 2 Saith of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress,  
My God, in whom I trust.
- 3 For He shall deliver thee from the snare of the hunter,  
From the devouring pestilence.
- 4 With His feathers shall He cover Thee,

1. RESTETH (lit. "lodgeth, passeth the night").

In each clause of verses 1, 2, God is spoken of by a different name.

God is "Most High," far above all the rage and malice of enemies; "Almighty," so that none can stand before His power; "Jehovah," the

God of covenant and grace, who has revealed Himself to His people; and it is of such a God that the Psalmist says in holy confidence, He is "my God," in whom I trust.

3. SNARE OF THE HUNTER. Comp. xviii. 5, cxxiv. 7, Hos. ix. 8.

4. WITH HIS FEATHERS. See the

\* Stier mentions that some years ago an eminent physician in St. Petersburg recommended this Psalm as the best preservative against the cholera.

- And under His wings shalt thou find refuge,  
 His truth shall be (a) shield and buckler.  
 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night,  
 (Nor) for the arrow that flieth by day,  
 6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness,  
 (Nor) for the sickness that wasteth at noon-day.  
 7 A thousand shall fall at thy side,  
 And ten thousand at thy right hand,  
 (But) it shall not come nigh thee.  
 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold  
 And see the reward of the wicked.  
 9 For Thou, O Jehovah, art my refuge:—  
 Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation ;  
 10 (Therefore) there shall no evil befall thee,  
 Neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent ;  
 11 For He will give His angels charge over thee,  
 To keep thee in all thy ways.

beautiful passage, Deut xxxii. 11, and note on Ps. xvii. 8, lxxiii. 7.

5. TERROR BY NIGHT (comp. Song of Sol. iii. 8, Prov. iii. 23—26), in allusion, probably, to night attacks like those of Gideon (Judg. vii.), a favourite artifice of Oriental warfare ; or perhaps to a destruction like that of Sennacherib.

7. IT SHALL NOT COME NIGH THEE. The singular refers to any and every one of the evils mentioned in ver. 5, 6. "As the general who carries with him the conviction that he is called to a great work, whilst the bullets fall thick as hail about him, stands with calm eye and firm foot, and says, I know that the bullet is not yet cast which can strike me, so stands the man of prophetic faith in the hour of danger, with the conviction that the thunderbolt will turn aside from his head, and the torrent dry up at his feet, and the arrow fall

blunted from his breast, *because the Lord wills it.*"—Tholuck.

10. TENT. An instance of the way in which the Patriarchal life became stereotyped, so to speak, in the language. There is an allusion, perhaps, to Israel's exemption from the plagues of Egypt, Exod. xii. 23.

11. ANGELS ; not as "guardian angels," but as God's ministers in the government of the world, and especially as "sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation." (Comp. xxxiv. 7.) By the "lion and adder" there is no need to understand exclusively, or chiefly, the powers of darkness, the evil spirits. As by "a stone" all hindrances, so by "the lion and dragon" all hostile powers, are denoted, more particularly in the natural world. This may be illustrated from histories like those of Samson, David, Daniel, &c., and especially by Matt. iv. 6.

- 12 On (their) hands they shall bear thee (up),  
 Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
- 13 Upon the lion and adder shalt thou tread,  
 Thou shalt trample the young lion and serpent under  
 thy feet.
- 14 "Because he hath set his love upon Me,  
 Therefore will I deliver him ;  
 I will set him on high, because he knoweth My Name.
- 15 When he calleth upon Me, I will answer him,  
 I (will be) with him in trouble,  
 I will deliver him and honour him ;
- 16 With long life will I satisfy him,  
 And show him My salvation."

What a prophecy of the victory of faith over the material as well as over the spiritual world, and that not only by miraculous but by non-miraculous means ! Comp. Mark xvi. 18 ; Luke x. 19 ; John xiv. 12. The quotation both in Matt. iv. 6, and Luke iv. 10, 11, is made from the LXX., but the former omits the whole of the clause "to keep thee," &c., and the latter the words "in all thy ways," so that it would seem that the omission of this last was designed in the mouth of the tempter. The "ways" spoken of in the Psalm are the "ways" of obedience and duty, not the "ways" of presumption or self-seeking.

14—16. God's answer to the soul which trusts in Him. "God himself comes forward to establish the faith

of His servant, writes deeper in the soul so great a consolation, and confirms the testimony to His servant. 'He hath set his love upon Me—he knoweth My Name—he calleth upon Me'—these are the marks of a true servant of God. God draws nigh to one who so draws nigh to Him." Compare with this passage l. 15, 23.

The special promise of long life at the close, as a temporal blessing, is in accordance with the general character of the Old Testament. Still it is possible that men like the Psalmist, full of faith in God, attached a deeper and more spiritual meaning to promises and hopes like these, than was attached to them by the majority of their countrymen.

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## PSALM XCII.

THIS Psalm is called a Psalm for the Sabbath-day, and, as we learn from the Talmud, was appointed to be used in the Temple service on

that day. It was sung in the morning when, on the offering of the first lamb, the wine was poured out as a drink-offering unto the Lord (Numb. xxviii. 9). At the evening sacrifice one of the three passages, Exod. xv. 1—10, 11—19, Numb. xxi. 17—20, was sung: The Talmudic treatise above referred to gives the following as the selection of Psalms for the service, each day of the week, in the second Temple. On the first day, Ps. xxiv. ; on the second, Ps. xlviii. ; on the third, Ps. lxxxii. ; on the fourth, Ps. xciv. ; on the fifth, Ps. lxxxi. ; on the sixth, Ps. xciii. ; on the seventh, “A Psalm *or song for the Sabbath-day*, i.e. A Psalm or song for the future age (the age of the Messiah), all of which will be sabbath.”

It celebrates in joyful strain the greatness of God's works, and especially His righteous government of the world, as manifested in the overthrow of the wicked, and the prosperity and final triumph of the righteous. The *apparent* success of the ungodly for a time is admitted, but this is a mystery which worldly men, whose understanding has become darkened, cannot penetrate (ver. 6). The Psalm therefore touches upon the same great principles of the Divine government which are laid down in such Psalms as the first, the thirty-seventh, the forty-ninth, and the seventy-third. But here there is no struggle with doubt and perplexity, as in the seventy-third ; the Poet is beyond all doubt, above all perplexity ; he has not fallen down to the low level of the brutish man (comp. lxxiii. 22 with ver. 6 of this Psalm) ; he is rejoicing in the full and perfect conviction of the righteousness of God.

[A PSALM. A SONG FOR THE SABBATH DAY.]

- 1 IT is a good thing to give thanks to Jehovah,  
And to sing psalms to Thy Name, O Most High,
- 2 To declare Thy loving-kindness in the morning,  
And Thy faithfulness every night,
- 3 Upon a ten-stringed instrument and upon the lute,  
With sound or music upon the harp.

1. IT IS A GOOD THING, *i.e.* a delightful thing, not merely acceptable to God, but a real joy to the heart.

- 4 For Thou hast made me glad, O Jehovah, through that  
 Thou hast done,  
 I will sing aloud because of the works of Thy hands.
- 5 How great, O Jehovah, are Thy works !  
 Very deep are Thy thoughts.
- 6 A brutish man knoweth not,  
 And a fool doth not consider this.
- 7 When the wicked spring as the green herb,  
 And all the workers of iniquity do flourish,  
 It is that they may be destroyed for ever.
- 8 And Thou, O Jehovah, art (throned) on high for ever-  
 more.
- 9 For lo, Thine enemies, O Jehovah,  
 For lo, Thine enemies shall perish,  
 And all the workers of iniquity shall melt away.
- 10 But Thou hast exalted my horn like (the horn of) a  
 wild ox ;  
 I am anointed with fresh oil.

4. The great reason of all this joy. The Psalmist has witnessed the manifestation and the triumph of the eternal righteousness of God.

THAT THOU HAST DONE, or "Thy doing;" not here God's power in Creation (a misunderstanding which may have led to this Psalm being associated with the Sabbatical rest of creation), but God's moral government of the world. So also in the next clause, THE WORKS OF THY HANDS, as in cxliii. 5.

5. HOW GREAT; not as in lxxiii., "it was a trouble in mine eyes." Faith wonders and adores. Men's thoughts on such subjects are but folly. It is as though they considered not (ver. 6). Faith is the true interpreter of the world (ver. 7).

VERY DEEP. Comp. xxxvi. 6; xl. 5; cxxxix. 17; Rom. xi. 33.

6. A FOOL; in the same sense as in xiv. 1.

8. This verse, consisting of but one line, expresses the great central fact on which all the doctrine of the Psalm rests. This is the great pillar of the universe and of our faith.

ON HIGH. The word occurs only here as a predicate of God. Lit. "height," or "in the height" (accusative). Elsewhere God is said "to inhabit the height," Is. lvii. 15; to be "glorious in the height," xciii. 4; and in Mic. vi. 6 we have "God of height," i.e. "God on high," or "God in heaven."

9. SHALL MELT AWAY, lit. "shall separate themselves, disperse," breaking up as it were without the application of any external force.

10. FRESH OIL, or "green oil," as in Latin, *oleum viride*, said of the best oil.



- 11 Mine eye also hath seen (its desire) upon them that lie  
in wait for me,  
And mine ear hath heard (its desire) of the evil  
doers that rise up against me.
- 12 The righteous shall spring as the palm,  
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
- 13 They that are planted in the house of Jehovah  
Shall spring in the courts of our God ;
- 14 They shall still bear fruit in old age,  
They shall be full of sap and green,
- 15 To declare that Jehovah is upright,  
My rock in whom there is no unrighteousness.

11. THEM THAT LIE IN WAIT FOR ME ; the same whom in ver. 9. he calls "*Thine* enemies." Sure of the triumph of the kingdom of God, he is sure also of his own triumph.

12—15. What is true of the Psalmist is true of all who are partakers of the same faith. The date-palm and the cedar are selected as the loveliest images of verdure, fruitfulness, undecaying vigour and perpetuity. "Throughout the year, in the winter's cold as in the summer's heat, the palm continues green : not by years but by centuries is the cedar's age reckoned."—*Tholuck*. There is also a contrast : "The wicked spring as the green herb, or grass" (ver. 7), which soon withers away ; "The righteous spring as the palm," which is ever green and ever fruitful.

Besides this, there are only two passages in the Old Testament where the palm is used in comparison—Song of Sol. vii. 7, where it is said of the bride, "Thy stature is like to a palm-tree ;" Jer. x. 5, where the idols are said to be "upright as a palm-tree ;" and one in the Apocrypha, Ecclus. xxiv. 14, "I was exalted

like a palm-tree in Engaddi." This, as Dr. Howson has noticed, is remarkable, considering the beauty of the tree, and its frequent recurrence in the scenery of Palestine.

13. The figure need not be so far pressed as to imply that such trees actually grew in the Temple-court (see on lii. 8). Still it is by no means improbable that the precincts of the Temple contained trees.

14. THEY SHALL STILL BEAR FRUIT, in allusion probably to the great fruitfulness of the date-palm, which, when it reaches maturity, produces three or four hundred pounds' weight of fruit, and has been known even to produce six hundred pounds' weight.

15. TO DECLARE, &c. Thus in the end, God's righteous government of the world will be manifested. The flourishing of the workers of iniquity has been but for a moment (ver. 7, 9, 11) ; the joy and prosperity of the righteous is for ever. This is the signal proof of God's righteousness : this is the justification of the Psalmist's confidence resting ever on that unshaken "Rock."

## PSALM XCIII.

THE sum and substance of this Psalm is contained, as Hitzig has remarked, in the eighth verse of the preceding Psalm. It celebrates the majesty of Jehovah as Ruler of the Universe. He is Creator of the world. He has been its King from everlasting; it rests upon Him, and is stayed by His might. All the powers of nature obey Him, however lawless they may seem, as all the swelling and rage of men of which those are but a figure, must obey Him. But His majesty and His glory are seen, not only in controlling the powers of nature, and whatsoever exalteth and opposeth itself against Him, but in the faithfulness of His word, and in the holiness of His house.

As the Psalm speaks of a particular manifestation of Jehovah's kingly rule, of a time when He has taken to Himself His great power and reigned (see note on ver. 1), it may in this sense be termed Messianic. For, as Delitzsch has pointed out, the Old Testament prophecy concerning the kingdom of God consists of two series of predictions, the one of which speaks of the reign of the anointed of Jehovah out of Zion, the other of the reign of Jehovah Himself as the great King over all the earth. These two lines of prophecy converge in the Old Testament, but never meet. Only here and there do we discern an intimation (as in xlv. 7) that the two are one.

I JEHOVAH is King, He hath clothed Himself with  
majesty;  
Jehovah hath clothed Himself, He hath girded Him-  
self with strength.

1. IS KING. More exactly, "hath become King," as if by a solemn coronation (comp. the same expression of a new monarch ascending the throne, 2 Sam. xv. 10; 1 Kings i. 11; 2 Kings ix. 13). He has been King from everlasting, but now His kingdom is visibly set up, His power and

His majesty fully displayed and acknowledged; as it is said in the Apocalypse of the final manifestation, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."

HATH CLOTHED HIMSELF. Comp. civ. 1, 2; Is. li. 9; Job xl. 10.

- Yea, the world is established that it cannot be moved.
- 2 Thy throne is established of old ;  
Thou art from everlasting.
  - 3 The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah,  
The floods have lifted up their voice,  
The floods lift up their roaring.
  - 4 More than the voices of many mighty waters,  
(Even than) the breakers of the sea,  
Jehovah on high is mighty.
  - 5 Thy testimonies are very faithful :  
Holiness becometh Thy house, O Jehovah, for ever.

YEA, THE WORLD, &c. The effect of the Divine rule and power, as in xcvi. 10. The reference is apparently not merely to the creation of the world and its providential administration, but to these as representing in a figure the moral government of God. For the throne of God in ver. 2 denotes, as Calvin says, His righteous sway and government, and the language of ver. 3 is to be understood figuratively as well as literally.

Hupfeld infers from the use of the word "floods" (comp. Hab. iii. 8), the epithet of "mighty" in next verse, which is used of waters besides only in Exod. xv. 10, and the "lifting up the voice," as in Hab. iii. 10 (comp. lxxvii. 17, 18), that there is an allusion to the passage of the Red Sea.

THEIR ROARING, lit. "their blow," or "beating," said of the dashing of the surf in thunders upon the shore.

The word occurs only here ; in the next verse the plural "voices" is used here only of the sea, elsewhere always of the thunder.

4 JEHOVAH ON HIGH. Comp. xcii. 8, xxix. 10.

5. The transition is abrupt, from the majesty of God as seen in His dominion of the world of nature, to His revelation of Himself in His word. At the same time there is a connection between the two, as in xix. God who rules the world, He whose are the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever, has given His testimonies to His people, a sure and faithful word, and has Himself come to dwell among them, making His house and His people holy.

FOR EVER, lit. "for length of days," as in xxiii. 6.

## PSALM XCIV.

By the LXX. this is called "A lyric Psalm of David, for the fourth day of the week." It is probably not a Psalm of David, but the latter part of the Inscription accords with the Talmudic tradition (see Introduction to Ps. xcii.).

The Psalm opens with an appeal to God to execute righteous vengeance on wicked rulers, judges who oppress and crush the helpless, whilst in their folly they dream that His long-suffering is but the supineness of indifference. It concludes with the expression of a calm confidence that God's righteousness will be finally manifested. The righteous, taught by God's fatherly discipline, and upheld by Him, can wait for the end, when the wicked shall reap the reward of their wickedness, and shall be utterly destroyed.

The conviction thus expressed of the righteousness of God's government is similar to that in Ps. xcii., except that here this conviction is grounded more directly on personal experience.

The Psalm may be thus divided :—

1. An Introduction, consisting of an appeal to God. Ver. 1, 2.
2. The reason for this appeal, namely, the insolence and oppression of the wicked. Ver. 3—7.
3. The blindness and folly of such conduct, as a virtual contempt of God. Ver. 8—11.
4. In contrast with this the blessedness of those who are taught of God, and who can therefore in their confidence possess their souls. Ver. 12—15.
5. The strong personal conviction of Jehovah's righteousness, based upon past experience. Ver. 16—19.
6. A conviction which extends also to the future, and by virtue of which the Psalmist sees righteous retribution already accomplished upon the wicked. Ver. 20—23.

- 1 O JEHOVAH, Thou God to whom vengeance belongeth,  
Thou God to whom vengeance belongeth, shine forth.
- 2 Lift up Thyself, Thou judge of the earth,  
Render a reward to the proud.
- 3 How long shall the wicked, O Jehovah,  
How long shall the wicked triumph?
- 4 They pour forth, they speak hard things,  
All the workers of iniquity carry themselves proudly.
- 5 Thy people, O Jehovah, they crush,  
And Thine inheritance do they afflict.
- 6 The widow and the stranger they slay,  
And they murder the fatherless;
- 7 And say: "Jah seeth not,  
Neither doth the God of Jacob regard (it)."
- 8 Consider, O ye brutish among the people!  
And, ye fools, when will ye be wise?
- 9 He who planteth the ear, shall He not hear?  
Or He that formeth the eye, shall not He see?
- 10 He that instructeth the nations, shall not He reprove,

1. GOD TO WHOM, &c. : lit. "God of vengeance." Comp. ix. 12, Jer. li. 56.

5. CRUSH : Prov. xxii. 22 ; Is. iii. 15.

6. The LXX. have transposed the words "fatherless" and "stranger," and rendered the last "proselyte." The widow and the fatherless are mentioned often, as particular instances of those whose misery ought to excite compassion, but whose defencelessness makes them the easy prey of the wicked.

7. "JAH SEETH NOT." Comp. x. 11, lix. 7. Not that they deliberately utter such blasphemy, but their conduct amounts to this, it is a practical atheism. See on xiv. 1.

8. The utter folly of this denial of a Divine providence, because judgment is not executed speedily. The argument which follows is from the perfections of the creature to those of the Creator. The very nature of God and of man convicts these fools of their folly. "Can anything," says Herder, "more to the point be urged, even in our time, against the tribe of philosophers who deny a purpose and design in Nature? All that they allege of the dead abstraction which they term 'nature,' the heathen ascribe to their gods : and what the Prophets say against the one holds against the other."

10. In the English Bible this is broken up into two questions, and

(Even) He that teacheth man knowledge ?

11 Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of man,  
That they (are but) vanity.

12 Blessed is the man whom Thou instructest, O Jah,  
And teachest out of Thy law,

13 To give him rest from the days of evil,  
Till the pit be digged for the wicked.

a clause is supplied in the second member, which does not exist in the Hebrew, "Shall not He know?" But this is incorrect. There is a change in the argument. Before it was from the physical constitution of man ; now, it is from the moral government of the world. He who is the great Educator of the race ("who nurtureth the heathen," P. B. V.), who gives them all the knowledge they possess, has He not the right, which even human teachers exercise, of chastening, correcting, reproving? He may not always exercise the right, but it is His. This, which I believe to be the true interpretation of the verse, is that of the LXX. : 'Ο παιδεύων ἔθνη, οἷχι ἐλεγξει ; ὁ διδάσκων ἄνθρωπον γνῶσιν. Hengstenberg remarks that the doctrine of an influence exercised by God upon the consciences of the heathen is of comparatively rare occurrence in the Old Testament, a fact to be explained by the very depraved condition of such of the heathen as were the near neighbours of the Israelites, and among whom few traces of such an influence could be seen. On this Divine education see Rom. i. 20, ii. 14, 15.

11. So far from "not seeing," "not regarding," as these "brutish" persons fondly imagine, Jehovah reads their inmost thoughts and

devices, as He reads the hearts of all men, even though for a time they are unpunished. The verse is quoted in 1 Cor. iii. 20, ὁ Κύριος γινώσκει τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς τῶν σοφῶν ὅτι εἰσὶν μάταιοι, which only deviates from the version of the LXX. in the substitution of the special σοφῶν, as more suitable to the Apostle's argument, for the general ἀνθρώπων.

VANITY, lit. "a breath," as in xxxix. 5, 6.

Probably the best rendering of this clause would be, "For they (*i.e.* men) are but a breath ;" this vanity, weakness, and emptiness of men being alleged as a reason why God sees and understands their thoughts : they are finite, whereas He is infinite.

12. The Psalmist turns to comfort the individual sufferer. God, who educates the heathen (ver. 10), educates also the Israelite, giving him a better instruction (comp. Deut. viii. 5 ; Job v. 17), inasmuch as it is that of a direct Revelation.

14. TO GIVE HIM REST. This is the end of God's teaching, that His servant may wait in patience, unmoved by, safe FROM THE DAYS OF EVIL (comp. xlix. 5), seeing the evil all around him lifting itself up, but seeing also the secret, mysterious retribution, slowly but surely accomplishing itself. In this sense the "rest" is the rest of a calm, self-

- 14 For Jehovah will not thrust away His people,  
Neither will He forsake His inheritance.
- 15 For judgement must turn unto righteousness,  
And all the upright in heart shall follow it.
- 16 Who will rise up for me against the evil doers?  
Who will set himself up for me against the workers  
of iniquity?
- 17 Unless Jehovah had been my help,  
My soul had soon dwelt in silence.
- 18 (But) when I said, My foot hath slipt,  
Thy loving-kindness, O Jehovah, held me up.
- 19 In the multitude of my anxious thoughts within me,  
Thy comforts refreshed my soul.
- 20 Can the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee,  
Which frameth mischief by statute?

possessed spirit, as Is. vii. 4, xxx. 15, xxxii. 17, lvii. 20, and "to give him" = "that Thou mayest give him." Others interpret the "rest" of external rest, deliverance from sufferings (comp. Job iii. 13, 17); then "to give" would be = "so as to give," &c.

14. FOR. God will give peace to the man whom He teaches, *for* he is a partaker of the covenant, one of that PEOPLE and that INHERITANCE which He cannot forsake, and He cannot forsake them till righteousness ceases to be righteousness.

15. FOR JUDGEMENT, &c. Judgement cannot always be perverted, cannot always fail. It must appear in its true character at last as very righteousness. This, no doubt, was what Luther meant by his forcible rendering:—

"Denn Recht muss doch Recht bleiben."

SHALL FOLLOW IT, lit. "(shall be) after it," *i.e.* shall give in their

adhesion to it, openly avow their attachment to it. For the phrase, see 1 Sam xii. 14; 2 Sam. ii. 10; 1 Kings xiv. 8.

16—19. Application to himself, and record of his own experience.

17. Silence, *i.e.* of the grave, or the unseen world, as in xxxi. 18, cxv. 17.

20—23. This strophe, like the last, applies the general doctrine of the Psalm to the individual case, the personal security of the Psalmist, and the righteous retribution visited upon the evil-doers. But for "Jehovah *my* God," in ver. 22, we have, in ver. 23, "Jehovah *our* God," as if to remind us that his personal welfare does not stand apart from, but is bound up with, that of the nation. Comp. ver. 14.

20. THE THRONE or "judgement-seat." The word is purposely employed, as Calvin observes, to show that he is inveighing, not against common assassins or thieves, but against tyrants who, under a false pretext of

- 21 They gather themselves in troops against the soul of  
the righteous,  
And condemn the innocent blood.
- 22 But Jehovah hath been a high tower for me,  
And my God the rock of my refuge.
- 23 And He hath requited them their own iniquity,  
And shall destroy them through their own wicked-  
ness ;  
Jehovah our God shall destroy them.

justice, oppressed the Church. The throne of the king, the seat<sup>7</sup> of the judge, which is consecrated to God, they stain and defile with their crimes.

BY STATUTE. They claim to be acting according to law, seeking to hide their unrighteousness by a holy name.

#### 21. CONDEMN THE INNOCENT

BLOOD, *i.e.* "condemn the innocent to death;" comp. Matt. xxvii. 4.

23. HATH REQUITED, lit. "hath caused to return," as vii. 16, liv. 5. The preterites here express, not so much what has already taken place, as the confidence of faith which looks upon that which shall be as if already accomplished. Hence the interchange with the futures which follow.

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## PSALM XCV.

THIS Psalm is one of a series, as has been already observed, intended for the Temple worship, and possibly composed for some festal occasion. Both the joyfulness of its opening verses, and its general character, in which it resembles the 81st Psalm, would render it suitable for some of the great national feasts.

As to the date of its composition nothing certain can be said. The LXX. call it a Psalm of David ; and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in making a quotation from the Psalm, uses the expression "in David," but this is evidently only equivalent to saying "in the Psalms." In the Hebrew it has no Inscription.

In Christian liturgies the Psalm has commonly been termed the



Invitatory Psalm. We are all familiar with it, as used in the Morning Service of our Church ; and it has been sung in the Western Churches from a very remote period before the Psalms of the Nocturn or Matins. (Pakmer, *Orig. Liturg.* i. 221.)

It consists of two very distinct parts :—

I. The first is an invitation to a joyful public acknowledgement of God's mercies. Ver. 1—7.

II. The second (beginning with the last member of ver. 7 to the end) is a warning to the people against the unbelief and disobedience through which their fathers had perished in the wilderness.

- 1 O COME, let us sing (joyfully) unto Jehovah,  
Let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation ;
- 2 Let us go to meet His face with thanksgiving,  
With psalms let us shout aloud unto Him.
- 3 For a great God is Jehovah,  
Yea, a great King above all gods.
- 4 (Even He) in Whose hand are the deep places of the earth :

1—7. The character of the invitation here given, to worship God, not with penitence and brokenness of heart, but with loud thanksgiving, is the more remarkable, when we recollect in what a strain the latter part of the Psalm is written.

I. UNTO JEHOVAH. Augustine lays stress on this : “He invites to a great feast of joy, of joy not unto the world, but unto the Lord.” And in the next clause, where the Latin has *jubilemus*, he explains it of a joy which runs beyond all words.

ROCK OF OUR SALVATION, as in lxxxix. 26. Comp. “rock of my refuge,” xciv. 22.

3. A threefold reason is given why this worship should be offered with glad hearts and loud thanksgivings—that Jehovah is a King more glorious

than all “who are called gods, and who are worshipt,” that He is the Creator of the world, that He is the watchful shepherd of His own chosen people.

ABOVE ALL GODS : not the angels, but all the gods of the heathen. Comp. Exod. xviii. 11, xv. 11, &c. It cannot be inferred from this language that the Psalmist supposed the heathen deities to have any real power, or real existence (comp. xcvi. 5). He is merely contrasting heathen objects of worship, clothed in the imagination of their worshipers with certain attributes, and the One true supreme object of worship, who *is* really all, and more than all, which the heathen think their gods to be. See more in the note on xcvi. 7.

- And the heights of the mountains are His.  
 5 Whose is the sea,—and He made it,  
 And His hands formed the dry land.  
 6 O come let us worship and bow down,  
 Let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker.  
 7 For He is our God,  
 And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep  
 of His hand.

To-day oh that ye would hear His voice :

- 8 “Harden not your heart as at Meribah,  
 As in the day of Massah [trial] in the wilderness,

6. O COME. Again the invitation to lowliest adoration and worship, called forth afresh by the remembrance of God's revelation to, and covenant with Israel.

OUR MAKER, and ver. 7, OUR GOD, thus asserting the personal covenant relationship of God to His people (so Moses speaks of “the Rock who begat thee, the God who made thee,” Deut. xxxii. 18); and here, as so often elsewhere, God's majesty as seen in Creation is linked with His love as seen in Redemption. See on xix. 7.

7. PEOPLE OF HIS PASTURE. There is here the same solemn strain of warning and exhortation breaking in upon the very joy and gladness of the Temple worship, as we have already observed in lxxxi. 6. Psalms like these seem to have had a double purpose. They were not only designed to be the expression of public devotion, the utterance of a nation's supplications and thanksgivings, but they were intended also to teach, to warn, to exhort. They were sermons as well as liturgies. Hence, too, the prophetic character which marks them. The Psalmist, like every true preacher, comes as an ambassador from above, speaking not

his own words, but the words which God has given him, the words which God Himself has uttered.

The warning here rests, as in lxxviii., lxxxi., &c., on the example of their fathers in the desert.

TO-DAY, the present moment, as critical and decisive, the day of grace which may be lost; or the reference may be to some special circumstances under which the Psalm was composed. “To-day” refers not only to a particular historical crisis, but to every occasion on which the Psalm was used in public worship. “Often as they were faithless, the ‘to-day’ sounded ever anew; for the ‘gifts and calling of God are without repentance.’”—*Tholuck*.

8. HARDEN NOT. Bleek asserts that this is the only place where to “harden the heart” is spoken of as *man's* act, elsewhere it is said to be God's act; but this is not correct. Man is said to harden his own heart, Exod. ix. 34; 1 Sam. vi. 6; Prov. xxviii. 14; Deut. xv. 7; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13.

MERIBAH, “striving” or “provocation.” MASSAH, “temptation” or “trial.” From Exod. xvii. 1—7, it would appear that *both* names were given to the same locality. But, according to Numb. xx. 1—13, the

- 9 When your fathers tried Me,  
 Proved Me, yea saw My work.  
 10 Forty years (long) was I grieved with (that) generation,  
 (saying)  
 ‘It is a people that do err in (their) heart,  
 And they do not know My ways;’  
 11 So that I swear in My wrath,  
 They shall not enter into My rest.”

names were given to two different places on different occasions. Comp. also Deut. xxxiii. 8, “Thy Holy One whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah.”

IN THE WILDERNESS of Zin, near Kadesh, where the second murmuring against Moses and Aaron for want of water took place (Num. xx. 1).

9. TRIED ME. In allusion to Massah, “trial,” in ver. 8.

MY WORK. Whether miracles of deliverance or acts of judgement, all that I did.

9. FORTY YEARS. These words in the quotation in Heb. iii. 9 are joined, as in the Syriac, with the preceding verse, and the word “wherefore” is inserted after them. This departs both from the Hebrew and the LXX. The alteration is evidently intentional, because the passage is afterwards quoted iii. 17 as it stands in the Psalm.

WAS I GRIEVED. The word is a strong word, expressive of *loathing* and *disgust*.

A PEOPLE THAT DO ERR, lit. “a people of wanderers in heart.” There may be, as Hupfeld suggests, an allusion to the *outward* wandering in the wilderness as the punishment of this *inner* wandering. The same word is used of the former, cvii. 4.

AND THEY DO NOT, &c. This is almost equivalent to “for they do not,” &c. Their ignorance of the

straight way of God, “the king’s highway” (as Bunsen calls it), is the reason that they wander in crooked by-paths.

11. I SWARE. The reference is to Num. xiv. 21, &c., 28, &c.

MY REST: strictly “place of settlement,” as the abode of God (comp. cxxxii. 8, 14), but used also of the land of promise (Deut. xii. 9), as a place of *rest* after the wandering in the wilderness.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (iv. 6—9) argues, from the use of the word “to-day” in ver. 7, that the language of the Psalm is applicable not merely to the times of the Law, but also to the Gospel dispensation; and from the reference to God’s rest here, “in David” (*i.e.* in the Book of Psalms), that Canaan was not the true rest. Joshua did not bring the people unto God’s rest, he says, otherwise we should not find, in a Psalm written so long after the settlement of the people in Canaan, a warning addressed to them not to sin as their fathers, lest they also through unbelief should fail of God’s rest. Hence, he argues, the rest must be still future *ἀπολείπεται ἔτι σαββατισμός*. This, however, is not clear on the face of the Psalm, as the words “they shall not enter into My rest” seem to refer to the *past*, not the *present*, history of Israel. Hence Calvin remarks on the quotation in the Epistle to the Hebrews: *Subtilius disputat quam ferant prophetæ verba.*”

## PSALM XCVI.

THIS grand prophetic Psalm looks forward with joyful certainty to the setting up of a Divine kingdom upon earth. But it is only indirectly Messianic. It connects the future blessings, not with the appearance of the Son of David, but with the coming of Jehovah. And it has already been pointed out (in a note on Psalm lxxii. 17) that there are in the Old Testament two distinct lines of prophecy, culminating in these two advents. Their convergence and ultimate unity are only seen in the light of New Testament fulfilment. The same hopes, however, gather about both, as may be seen, for instance, by a comparison of this Psalm with such a passage as Isaiah xi. 1—9. Calvin, in his Introduction to the Psalm, observes that it is “an exhortation to praise God, addressed not to the Jews only, but to all nations. Whence” (he adds) “we infer that the Psalm refers to the kingdom of Christ; for till He was revealed to the world, His name could not be called upon anywhere but in Judæa.”

The LXX. have a double Inscription :—

(1) “When the House was built after the Captivity,” which is probably correct, as indicating that the Psalm was composed after the Exile, and for the service of the second Temple.

(2) “An Ode of David,” which seems to contradict the other, but was no doubt occasioned by the circumstances that this Psalm, together with portions of Psalms cv. and cvi., is given with some variations (which will be found in the Notes) by the author of the Book of Chronicles, as the Psalm which was sung when the Ark was brought into the sanctuary in Zion.

The Psalm consists of four strophes (of which the first three are perfectly regular, consisting of six lines each) :—

I. Jehovah is to be praised in all the world and at all times. Ver. 1—3.

II. He alone is worthy to be praised, for all other objects of worship are nothing. Ver. 4—6.

III. Let all the heathen confess this, and give Him the honour due to His Name. Ver. 7—9.

IV. Let all the world hear the glad tidings that Jehovah is King; and even things without life share the common joy. Ver. 10—13.

- 1 O SING unto Jehovah a new song,  
Sing unto Jehovah, all the earth.
- 2 Sing unto Jehovah, bless His name,  
Publish His salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare His glory among the nations,  
His wonders among all the peoples.
- 4 For great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised,  
He is to be feared above all gods;
- 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,  
But Jehovah made the heavens.
- 6 Honour and majesty are before Him,  
Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.
- 7 Give unto Jehovah, O families of peoples,  
Give unto Jehovah glory and strength;

1. A NEW SONG. See on xxxiii.  
3. The new song is not the Psalm itself, but one which shall be the fit expression of all the thoughts and hopes and triumphs of the new and glorious age which is about to dawn. It is the glad welcome given to the King when He enters His kingdom. Comp. with this verse Is. xlii. 10, lx. 6, lxvi. 19.

2. PUBLISH, *i.e.* "proclaim good tidings."

4. The manifestation of God's glory. Comp. cxlv. 3, xlviii. 1.

ABOVE ALL GODS (as in xcv. 3; see note on xcvi. 7.) Here, as is plain from what follows, the heathen deities, which are IDOLS, lit. "nothings," a favourite word in Isaiah

for idols, but occurring also as early as Lev. xix. 4, xxvi. 1. See the strong assertions of their absolute nothingness in Is. xli. xlv.

5. JEHOVAH MADE THE HEAVENS. So has He manifested His power and majesty as the Creator in the eyes of all the world; but the chief manifestation of His glory is in Israel, "in His sanctuary." Compare the same strain in xcv. 3—7.

7—9. The families of the nations themselves are called upon to take up the song in which Israel has made known to them the salvation of Jehovah. Comp. Zeph. iii. 9.

These three verses are taken partly from xxix. 1, 2.

- 8 Give unto Jehovah the glory due unto His name,  
Bring presents, and come into His courts.
- 9 Bow yourselves before Jehovah in holy vestments,  
Tremble before Him, all the earth.
- 10 Say ye among the nations : Jehovah is King,—  
Yea the world is established that it cannot be  
moved,—  
He shall judge the peoples uprightly.
- 11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth exult,  
Let the sea thunder, and the fulness thereof ;
- 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein.  
Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy
- 13 Before Jehovah ;—For he cometh ;  
For he cometh to judge the earth ;  
He shall judge the world in righteousness,  
And the peoples in His faithfulness.

8. PRESENTS, in allusion to the Oriental custom which required gifts to be brought by all who would be admitted to the presence of a king. Comp. xlv. 12, lxviii. 29, lxxii. 10.

10. The glad tidings which the world is to hear. The world's largest hopes are to be fulfilled. A new era is to begin, a reign of righteousness and peace, a time so blessed that even the inanimate creation must be partakers of the joy. Comp. Is. xxxv. 1, xlii. 10, xlv. 23, xlv. 8, xlix. 13, lv. 12. With the coming of Jehovah and the setting up of His kingdom all the broken harmonies of creation shall be restored. Not "the sons of God" only, but the whole creation is still looking forward to this great consummation. (Rom. viii. 21.)

JEHOVAH IS KING, lit. "hath become King ;" hath taken to Himself His great power and reigned. See xciii. 1 ; Rev. xi. 17.

YEA THE WORLD, &c. This clause is introduced somewhat abruptly, and quasi-parenthetically, from xciii. 1. It

may be owing to the abruptness of this clause that the Chronicler has transposed some of the clauses in his adaptation of the Psalm. His arrangement (1 Chr. xvi. 30—33) is as follows : "Tremble before Him all the earth, yea the world is established (that) it cannot be moved. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth exult, and let them say among the nations, Jehovah is King. Let the sea thunder, and the fulness thereof. Let the field exult, and all that is therein. Then shall the trees of the wood shout for joy before Jehovah, For He cometh to judge the earth."

13. HE COMETH. The repetition is full of force and animation. The participle is used to express more vividly the coming of Jehovah, as if actually taking place before the eyes of the Psalmist. It is a coming to judgement, but a judgement which is to issue in salvation. This judgement in righteousness and faithfulness, and the peace which follows thereon, are beautifully portrayed in Is. xi. 1—9.

## PSALM XCVII.

THE advent of Jehovah, and His righteous rule over the whole earth, is the subject of this Psalm, as of the last. Here, however, it would seem as if some great display of God's righteousness, some signal deliverance of His people, had kindled afresh the hope that the day was at hand, yea had already dawned, when He would take to Himself His great power and reign.

"Jehovah is King." Such is the glad assurance with which the Psalm opens. He has come to take possession of His throne with all the awful majesty with which He appeared on Sinai. All nature is moved at His presence. The heavens have uttered their message, telling of His righteousness, and all the nations of the world have seen His glory. His empire must be universal. Already the idols and the worshippers of idols are ashamed : and Zion rejoices in the coming of her King. He is near, very near. The first flush of the morning is already brightening the sky. They who love His appearing may look for Him, in holy abhorrence of evil and in faithfulness of heart, waiting till they enter into the joy of their Lord. Such is briefly the purport of the Psalm.

The structure of the Psalm, like the last, consists of strophes of three verses.

I. In the first, the coming of Jehovah is portrayed as if actually present. Ver. 1—3.

II. In the second, its effects are described on nature, and its purpose with reference to the world at large. Ver. 4—6.

III. The third speaks of the different impression produced on the heathen and on Israel, and the exaltation of God above all earthly power as the final result. Ver. 7—9.

IV. The fourth is an exhortation to the righteous, and also a promise full of consolation. Ver. 10—12.

- 1 JEHOVAH is King : let the earth exult,  
Let the multitude of the isles be glad (thereof).
- 2 Cloud and darkness are round about Him,  
Righteousness and judgement are the pillars of His throne.
- 3 A fire goeth before Him,  
And devoureth His adversaries round about Him.
- 4 His lightnings gave shine unto the world,  
The earth saw, and trembled.
- 5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of  
Jehovah,  
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
- 6 The Heavens have declared His righteousness,  
And all the peoples have seen His glory.

1. The strain of the preceding Psalm, xcvi. 10, 11, is here resumed. Comp. also Is. xlii. 10—12, li. 5.

MULTITUDE OF THE ISLES, lit. "the many isles," or "many as they are." (Comp. Is. lii. 15.) The word rendered "isles" is used strictly of the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean Sea (as in lxxii. 10) : but perhaps here, as in the later chapters of Isaiah, in a wider sense, of heathen countries at large.

2. The coming of God is thus frequently described by later prophets and psalmists in images borrowed from the manifestation of God on Sinai (Exod. xix. 9, 16, xx. 21 ; Deut. iv. 11, v. 23) ; as in xviii. 9.

THE PILLARS, or "foundation." The word is singular, and means strictly "support." Comp. lxxxix. 14.

3. A FIRE, as in l. 3. Comp. also Hab. iii. 5, and the whole description in that chapter, so solemn and so majestic, of God's coming judgement.

4. GAVE SHINE UNTO. See on

lxxvii. 18, whence the first member of this verse is taken : with the second compare lxxvii. 16.

5. THE MOUNTAINS MELTED : compare Micah i. 4, and Ps. lxxviii. 2.

THE LORD OF THE WHOLE EARTH. This name of God occurs first in Joshua iii. 11, 13, where the Ark (at the passage of the Jordan) is called "the ark of Jehovah the Lord of the whole earth," as if emphatically ; then when the people were about to occupy their own land, to distinguish Jehovah their God from the merely local and national gods of the heathen. The name is found again in Micah iv. 13 ; Zech. iv. 14, vi. 5.

6. HAVE DECLARED HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. This is the end and purpose of God's coming (as in l. 6). He comes to judge, and the act of judgement is one which the whole world shall witness, as in lxxvii. 1, 4, lxxix. 10, xcvi. 3. Comp. the language used of the great deliverance from Babylon, Is. xxxv. 2, xl. 5, lii. 10, lxvi. 18.



- 7 Ashamed are all they that serve graven images,  
That boast themselves in idols :—  
Bow down before Him, all ye gods.  
8 Zion heard and was glad,  
And the daughters of Judah exulted,  
Because of Thy judgements, O Jehovah.  
9 For THOU, Jehovah, art most high above all the earth,  
Thou art greatly exalted above all gods.

7. This and the next verse describe the twofold result of the Divine judgement—the impression produced on the heathen and on Israel, the confusion of all worshipers of idols, and the joy and exultation of the people of God.

ASHAMED, a word frequently employed with the same reference by the prophet Isaiah. It is a shame arising from the discovery of the utter vanity and nothingness of the objects of their trust.

ALL YE GODS. The LXX. and the Syr. both understand these to be angels. But the word *Elohim* (God) nowhere occurs in the sense of *angels*. The Chald. paraphrases : "all who worship idols." But doubtless heathen deities are meant. As all the worshipers are confounded, so must all the objects of their worship be overthrown, as Dagon was before the Ark of the Lord : all must yield before Him who is the Lord of the whole earth. If this be the meaning, the line may be taken as a sarcastic, contemptuous challenge to the idols of the heathen. If so, we need not enter into the question whether angels or spiritual beings were the real objects of worship, idols being only their representatives. Augustine supposes a heathen excusing himself when charged with idol-worship by saying that he does not worship the image but "the invisible deity which

presides over the image," and argues that this is a plain proof that the heathen worship not idols but demons, which is worse. He quotes in support of this view the language of St. Paul in 1 Cor. x. 19, 20, viii. 4. But he continues, if the pagans say we worship good angels, not evil spirits, then the angels themselves forbid such worship : "Let them imitate the angels and worship Him who is worshiped by the angels ;" and then he cites the passage in the Latin version, *Adorate eum, omnes angeli ejus*. Calvin here, as in the two preceding Psalms, xcv. 3, xcvi. 5, understands by "gods" both angels and also those creatures of the human imagination, the projected images of their own lusts and fears, which men fall down and worship.

3. HEARD AND WAS GLAD : borrowed from xlviii. 11, where see note, and the opposite to "the earth saw and trembled," ver. 4. Although the coming of Jehovah has been portrayed in images full of awe and terror, yet here, as in the two preceding Psalms, it is described as a coming to be welcomed with jubilant gladness by His Church. In the same spirit our Lord, when speaking of the signs of fear which shall be the precursors of His second coming, says, "When ye shall see these things begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads : for your redemption draweth nigh."

- 10 O ye that love Jehovah, hate evil ;  
 He keepeth the souls of His beloved,  
 He rescueth them from the hand of the wicked.
- 11 Light is sown for the righteous,  
 And gladness for the upright in heart.
- 12 Be glad in Jehovah, O ye righteous,  
 And give thanks to His holy Name.

10. The Psalm closes with a practical application, because the King and Judge is drawing near, a warning against the evil which is in the world, and an assurance of Divine protection and blessing to those who "hate evil." Comp. xxxiv 14—22.

11. LIGHT IS SOWN. The figure has been understood to mean that the prosperity of the righteous is future, just as seed is cast into the earth, and

only after a time springs up and bears fruit. But it is far simpler to take the verb "sown" in the sense of "scattered," "diffused."

Milton uses the same figure of the dew :

"Now Morn her rosy steps in th'  
 Eastern clime  
 Advancing, sow'd the earth with  
 Orient pearl."

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## PSALM XCVIII.

THIS Psalm is little more than an echo of Psalm xcvi. Its subject is "the last great revelation, the final victory of God, when His salvation and His righteousness, the revelation of which He has promised to the house of Israel, shall be manifested both to His own people and to all the nations of the earth."

The Inscription of the Psalm in the Hebrew is only the single word *Mizmor*, "Psalm." In the Syriac the Inscription runs, "Of the Redemption of the people from Egypt." Both the beginning and end of the Psalm are taken from Psalm xcvi. The rest of it is drawn chiefly from the latter portion of Isaiah.

This Psalm follows the reading of the First Lesson in our Evening Service. It was first inserted there in 1552, though it had not been sung among the Psalms of Vespers or Compline.

## [A PSALM.]

- 1 SING unto Jehovah a new song,  
For He hath done marvellous things;  
His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him  
salvation.
- 2 Jehovah hath made known His salvation,  
Before the eyes of the nations hath He revealed His  
righteousness.
- 3 He hath remembered His loving-kindness and His  
faithfulness to the house of Israel;  
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of  
our God.
- 4 Make a loud noise to Jehovah, all the earth;  
Break forth and sing joyfully, and play,—
- 5 Play unto Jehovah with the harp,  
With the harp and the voice of a psalm;
- 6 With trumpets and the voice of a cornet,  
Make a loud noise before Jehovah, the King.
- 7 Let the sea thunder, and the fulness thereof,  
The world and they that dwell therein.

1. The first two lines are taken from xcvi. 1; the last line, and ver. 2, 3, from Is. lii. 10, lxiii. 5.

HATH GOTTEN HIM SALVATION, or "the victory," as in E.V. Comp. xlix. 4, Is. lix. 16, lxiii. 5. I have preferred here the former rendering, because in the next verse the noun occurs from the same root, and there the rendering "salvation" is, I think, preferable to "victory."

2. BEFORE THE EYES, &c.; language especially applied (as in Isaiah) to the great deliverance from Babylon. See xcvi. 6.

RIGHTEOUSNESS, parallel with "salvation," as so frequently in the latter portion of Isaiah. See note on lxxi. 15.

3. LOVING-KINDNESS . . . FAITHFULNESS, the two attributes expressive of God's *covenant relationship* to His people.

4. BREAK FORTH AND SING, as in Is. lii. 9, though the more common phrase is "break forth into singing" (Is. xiv. 7; xlv. 23; xlix. 13; liv. 1).

5. VOICE OF A PSALM, as in Is. li. 3.

7. Compare xcvi. 11, and xxiv. 1.

- 8 Let the streams clap their hands,  
 Together let the mountains sing for joy,  
 9 Before Jehovah, for He cometh to judge the earth,  
 He shall judge the world with righteousness,  
 And the peoples with uprightness.

S. CLAP THEIR HANDS. The same phrase occurs Is. lv. 12 ; elsewhere a different verb is used, as in xlvii. 1 ;

2 Kings xi. 12. On the next verse see xcvi. 13.

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## PSALM XCIX.

THIS is the last of the series of Royal Psalms, of Psalms which celebrate the coming of Jehovah as King. The first of the series is the 93rd. This opens with the announcement that "Jehovah is King," passes on to tell that His throne has been from everlasting, that He made the world and that He rules it—rules the rage of the elements and the convulsions of political strife, of which that is the figure—and then concludes with one brief glance at His revelation of Himself to His people, and the distinguishing glory of the house in which He deigns to dwell, "*Holiness* becometh Thine house for ever."

The 95th Psalm\* ascribes glory to Him as "a great King above all gods" (ver. 3). The 96th would have the glad tidings run far and wide that "Jehovah is King," that "He shall judge the people righteously" (ver. 13). The 97th opens "Jehovah is King," speaks of the glory of His advent, and of the joy with which it is welcomed by His people. The 98th calls upon all lands to break forth into loud shouts "before the King Jehovah," to go forth and to meet Him with glad acclaim, with the voice of harp and cornet and trumpet, as men go forth to meet a monarch who comes in state to take possession of the throne of his fathers. The 99th, like the 93rd and the 97th, opens with the

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\* The 94th Psalm seems out of place in the series : it does not, like the rest, speak of the reign of Jehovah ; and the number seven, if we take the 100th Psalm as the closing Doxology, is complete without it.

joyful announcement that "Jehovah is King," and then bids all men fall down and confess His greatness, and worship Him who alone is *holy*. Both the first and the last of the series, the 93rd and the 99th, celebrate the kingly majesty and the holiness of Jehovah, and also the holiness of His worship.

All these Psalms, then, alike tell of the setting up of a Divine kingdom upon earth. All alike anticipate the event with joy. One universal anthem bursts from the whole wide world to greet the advent of the righteous King. Not Zion only and the daughters of Judah are glad, but the dwellers in far off islands and the ends of the earth. Even inanimate nature sympathises with the joy; the sea thunders her welcome, the rivers clap their hands, the trees of the wood break forth into singing before the Lord. In all these Psalms alike the joy springs from the same source, from the thought that on this earth, where might has so long triumphed over right, a *righteous* King shall reign, a kingdom shall be set up which shall be a kingdom of *righteousness*, and judgement, and truth.

In this Psalm, not only the righteous sway of the King, but His awful holiness, forms the subject of praise; and the true character of His worshipers as consecrated priests, holy, set apart for His service, is illustrated by the examples of holy men of old, like Moses, Aaron, and Samuel.

- 1 JEHOVAH is King, the peoples tremble;  
He sitteth throned upon the cherubim, the earth is moved.
- 2 Jehovah in Zion is great,  
And HE is exalted above all the peoples.
- 3 Let them give thanks unto Thy great and fearful Name;

1. IS KING, lit. "hath become King," *regnum capessivit*.

HE SITTETH. This is a participle, and is, strictly speaking, not so much an independent clause as a further description of the manner of God's kingly rule: He rules sitting throned, &c.

UPON THE CHERUBIM. See note on lxxx. 1.

3. LET THEM GIVE THANKS, or the words may be taken as the utterance of the Psalmist's hope that God's "great and fearful Name" (Deut. x. 17) which is known in Israel shall be glorified in all the world: "they shall give thanks," &c. But the optative form of expression accords best with the exhortation in ver. 5, 9.

He is holy.

- 4 And the might of the King loveth judgement ;  
THOU hast established uprightness,  
THOU hast executed judgement and righteousness in  
Jacob.
- 5 Exalt ye Jehovah our God,  
And bow down at His holy footstool :  
He is holy.
- 6 Moses and Aaron among His priests,  
And Samuel among them that called upon His Name—  
They called upon Jehovah, and HE answered them.

HE IS HOLY. This might be rendered "*It is holy*," *i.e.* the Name of God, mentioned just before. The meaning is the same in either case, for God's Name "is God Himself in His revealed holiness," as Delitzsch observes.

4. THE MIGHT OF THE KING: the same King who is mentioned ver. 1, Jehovah. His might is no arbitrary power, like that of earthly tyrants, but a judgement-loving might. His power only expresses itself in righteousness. He has "established uprightness" as the great eternal law of His government, the inner principle of His sway, and He has manifested it in all His acts: He "has executed judgement and righteousness in Jacob."

5. FOOTSTOOL: properly, the lower part or step of the throne (as Is. lxvi. 1, Ezek. xliii. 7), put for the throne itself. In cxxii. 7, it is spoken, apparently, of the Sanctuary, "His dwellings, or tabernacles," being in the parallelism. So the sanctuary is called "the place of My feet," Is. lx. 13. In 1 Chron. xxviii. 2 it is used of the ark of the covenant: in Lam. ii. 1, of the holy city (or perhaps the Temple); in Is. lxvi. 1 (comp. Matt. v. 35), of the whole earth. Here it seems doubtful whether the earthly or the heavenly sanctuary be meant.

6. The great subject of the Psalmist's praise is the *holiness* of God. It is a *holy* God whom he calls upon all men to worship. It is "a holy footstool," "a holy mountain," before which they bow down; it is therefore a holy worship which they must render. Such was the worship of His saints of old: and then likewise Jehovah manifested His holiness, both in "forgiving" and in "taking vengeance" (ver. 8).

MOSES . . . AMONG HIS PRIESTS. The priestly office was exercised by Moses in the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant, Exod. xxiv. 6—8, and again in the whole ritual for the consecration of Aaron and his sons, Levit. viii., as well as in the service of the sanctuary, before that consecration took place, Exod. xl. 22—27. So likewise he "called upon the Lord" as "a priest," in intercession for his people, Exod. xvii. 11, 12, xxxii. 30—32 (comp. Ps. cvi. 23); Num. xii. 13. Samuel also, though not here classed with the priests, but mentioned as a great example of prayer, not only like Moses discharged priestly functions, but also like Moses interceded for the people. We find him at Ramah offering sacrifices in the high place, and his independent priestly position so recognised by the people, that they would not partake

- 7 In the pillar of a cloud He spake unto them ;  
 They kept His testimonies and the statute He gave  
 them.
- 8 Jehovah, our God, THOU didst answer them ;  
 A forgiving God didst Thou prove to them,  
 And (a God) taking vengeance of their doings.
- 9 Exalt ye Jehovah our God,  
 And bow down before His holy mountain ;  
 For Jehovah our God is holy.

of the sacrifice till he had blessed it. (1 Sam. ix. 12, 13.) We find him on the occasion of a battle offering a whole burnt-offering unto Jehovah (1 Sam. vii. 9), at the same time that he sternly rebukes Saul for presuming to do the same thing (1 Sam. xiii. 11—13). For the efficacy of his prayers and intercessions—on which, and not on sacrifices, the stress is here laid—see the instances in 1 Sam. vii. 8, 9, xii. 16—18. Comp. Ecclus. xlv. 16, 17.

7. IN THE PILLAR OF A CLOUD. Strictly this applies only to Moses, or at the most only to Moses and Aaron : see Num. xii. 5.

THEY KEPT HIS TESTIMONIES ; an evidence of the holiness of those who called on Jehovah, and whom

He answered. This latter clause might be disposed in two lines, thus :—

“ They kept His testimonies,  
 And He gave them a statute  
 (statutes). ”

This verse would then, like all the others in this strophe, consist of three lines.

8. TAKING VENGEANCE. As it is clear that this cannot refer to the three great examples cited above, the pronouns in this verse (and perhaps, as Calvin and others think, in ver. 7) must refer to the people at large, who though not mentioned are in the Psalmist's thoughts, as he goes back to their ancient history.

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## PSALM C.

IF we are right in regarding Psalms xciii.—xcix. as forming one continuous series, one great prophetic oratorio, whose title is “Jehovah is King,” and through which there runs the same great

idea, this Psalm may be regarded as the Doxology which closes the strain. We find lingering in it notes of the same great harmony. It breathes the same gladness: it is filled with the same hope, that all nations shall bow down before Jehovah, and confess that He is God.

[A PSALM FOR THE THANK-OFFERING.\*]

- 1 SHOUT aloud unto Jehovah, all the earth.
- 2 Serve ye Jehovah with gladness,  
Come before His presence with a song (of joy).
- 3 Know ye that Jehovah, He is God:  
He hath made us and we are His,  
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
- 4, O, come into His gates with thanksgiving,  
(Into) His courts with praise:  
Be thankful unto Him, bless His Name.

1. SHOUT ALOUD: used of the welcome given to a king who enters his capital, or takes possession of the throne, as in xcvi. 4, 6, lxvi. 1.

ALL THE EARTH. As in all the preceding Psalms, xciii.—xcix., so here, the hope of the Psalmist goes far beyond the narrow limits of his own people and country. The blessing of Abraham has become the heritage of the Gentiles. The whole world is to acknowledge Jehovah, and to rejoice before Him.

2. SERVE YE. Compare ii. 11; where, however, in accordance with the warlike character ascribed to the monarch, it is added "with fear," instead of "with joy" as here.

3. KNOW YE, *i.e.* learn by experience.

HATH MADE US; *i.e.* not merely "hath created us," but hath made us what we are, viz. His people. Comp. 1 Sam. xii. 6: "It is Jehovah that

made (E. V. advanced) Moses and Aaron." See also Deut. xxxii. 6, 18; Ps. xcv. 6. And so Israel is called "the work (lit. *making*) of Jehovah," Is. xxix. 23, lx. 21.

4. The knowledge that Jehovah has chosen Israel to be His inheritance and the sheep of His pasture is not to tend to the exclusion of others from the same privileges. On the contrary, all nations are to flow to Jerusalem, and worship in the Temple. What in Isaiah ii. 2, 3 appears in the form of prediction, is here invitation, as in Is. ii. 5. "His temple is open to all. They may enter in; and when they enter may expect great things: 'For Jehovah is gracious, and His loving-kindness and truth never fail,' according to the repeated expressions of the Hallelujah-Psalms and Psalms of thanksgiving."—*Delitzsch*.

\* The expression is used apparently in a liturgical sense, to denote that the Psalm was to be sung during the offering of thank-offerings.



5 For Jehovah is good, His loving-kindness is for ever,  
And His faithfulness unto all generations.

5. GOOD, *i.e.* "gracious," "kind," as in xxv. 8, xxxiv. 8.

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## PSALM CI.

THIS Psalm has been styled "the godly purposes and resolves of a king." It might also be described as "*Speculum Regis*," a mirror for kings and all that are in authority. It opens with the joyful contemplation of God's mercy and justice as kingly virtues, in their measure and degree to be manifested in earthly kings. It then records the king's pious resolve to keep his own heart and life unspotted, and to remove from him all that might lead him astray. Yet scarcely has he uttered the resolve, when, reflecting on all that such a resolve implies, he breaks forth in the earnest cry that God Himself would come to him and take up His dwelling with him, giving him grace to walk in "a perfect way." Thus having consecrated himself and his house, he declares further how he will provide for the purity of his court. With jealous care he will exclude those who are the bane of kings' houses—the slanderer, the proud, the deceitful, the liar. None but the faithful, none but those who, like himself, walk in a perfect (*i.e.* blameless) way, shall be admitted to places of honour and trust about his person. Finally, the work of zealous reformation shall extend to his capital, the city of Jehovah, and to the utmost borders of the land, that he may see realized under his sway the great ideal, "Ye shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a *holy nation*."

All this falls in admirably with the early part of David's reign, and the words are just what we might expect from one who came to the throne with a heart so true to his God. If the words "When wilt Thou come unto me?" may be taken to express, as seems most

natural, David's desire to see the Ark at length fixed in the Tabernacle which he had prepared for it on Zion, the Psalm must have been written whilst the Ark was still in the house of Obededom (2 Sam. vi. 10, 11).

[A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 I WILL sing of loving-kindness and judgement,  
Unto Thee, O Jehovah, will I sing psalms.
- 2 I will give heed to a perfect way.  
—When wilt Thou come unto me?—  
I will walk with a perfect heart within my house.

I. LOVING-KINDNESS AND JUDGEMENT. These can only be the theme of praise as *Divine* attributes. But it is as a king who would frame his own rule and his kingdom after the Divine pattern that David makes these attributes the burden of his song. He meditates on the mercy and the righteousness of God, that he may learn the lesson of that mercy and righteousness himself. He meditates on them till his heart glows with the thought of their surpassing excellence, as seen in the Divine government, and with the earnest desire that the same kingly virtues may be transferred into his own life and reign.

SING PSALMS, or perhaps, rather, "play," *i.e.* upon the harp or other musical instruments.

2. I WILL GIVE HEED. The expression shows his sense of his own responsibility. The possession of absolute power too often dazzles and blinds men. An Eastern despot might have cast off all restraint, or at least might have allowed himself large licence in the indulgence of his passions or his follies, almost without scandal or hatred. The nobler, therefore, is this resolve.

WHEN WILT THOU COME? It would be possible to render: "I will give heed to a perfect way when Thou comest unto me;" but the question is far more expressive. It bursts forth from the heart, moved and stirred to its inmost centre, as it thinks of all the height and depth of that resolve "to walk in a perfect way." How shall a frail son of man keep his integrity? The task is too great for his own strength, honest and sincere as the resolution is, and therefore he cries, "When wilt Thou come unto me?"—come to be my abiding guest—come not only to dwell on Zion, in Thy tabernacle, but with me Thy servant, in my house and in my heart (comp. John xiv. 23), giving me the strength and the grace that I need? The expression is no doubt remarkable as occurring in the Old Testament; though if it be understood as referring to the removal of the Ark to Zion (see Introduction to the Psalm), it would be but a claiming of the promise in Exod. xx. 24: "In all places where I record My Name *I will come unto thee*, and bless thee."

- 3 I will not set before mine eyes any wicked thing ;  
The sin of unfaithfulness do I hate,  
It shall not cleave unto me.
- 4 A froward heart shall depart from me,  
A wicked person I will not know.
- 5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour,  
Him will I destroy.
- 6 Whoso hath a high look and proud heart,  
Him I will not suffer.
- 7 Mine eyes are upon the faithful in the land,

3. SET BEFORE MINE EYES, *i.e.* as an example to imitate. According to Calvin, he speaks in the previous verse of the manner in which he will regulate his private life; in this of his duties as a king.

WICKED THING, lit. "thing of Belial."

THE SIN OF UNFAITHFULNESS, lit. "the doing of turnings aside." All such deviations from truth, from integrity, from that Divine law by which he rules himself, shall not "cleave" to him. Temptations to such a course may beset him. The whisper might come, Policy requires this course, craft must be met by craft, power is given to be used, kings are above law, and the like. But he refuses to listen to the whisper of the serpent, and when it would fasten its fangs in him, he shakes it off.

4. First David proves himself, laying down the rule for his own guidance; then he determines what his court and household shall be.

In this verse he repudiates generally "the froward heart" and "the wicked person." In the following he enters more into detail.

A WICKED PERSON, or "wickedness;" but the former accords better with "the froward heart" (comp. Prov. xi. 20) in the parallelism.

5. The secret slanderer, seeking to ingratiate himself into his prince's favour by pulling down others, and the haughty, over-bearing noble (ver. 6), would be no uncommon characters in any court, least of all an Oriental court. Such persons would David destroy. Thus he exercised the kingly virtue of "judgement" (ver. 1). "As a private individual he could never have ventured on such a measure; but when he was placed on the throne, he received from God's hand the sword with which he was to punish wrong-doing."

6. A PROUD HEART, lit. "whoso is wide of heart," *i.e.* as puffed up and blown out with pride (comp. Prov. xxi. 4, xxviii. 25). Elsewhere the phrase, "a wide heart," occurs in a very different sense. It is said of Solomon that God gave him "a wide heart," *i.e.* comprehensiveness, a large grasp, the power not only of gathering facts, but the power of seeing their mutual relation; breadth of sympathy, and breadth of understanding.

I WILL NOT SUFFER, or, "I cannot away with." Is. i. 13; Jer. xlv. 22.

7. MINE EYES ARE UPON. Comp. xxxii. 8, xxxiv. 15, lxvi. 7. His ministers shall be chosen, not for high birth, or gifts of fortune, or talents,

That they may dwell with me.  
Whoso walketh in a perfect way,  
He shall be my servant.

8 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house,  
He that speaketh lies shall not be established in my sight.

9 Every morning will I destroy the wicked of the land,  
That I may cut off all workers of iniquity from the city of Jehovah.

or accomplishments, or flattering lips, or supple compliance, but for incorruptible fidelity; the word "faithful" implying that faithfulness to God is the basis of such fidelity to their king.

WHOSO WALKETH IN A PERFECT WAY, *i.e.* with evident reference to ver. 2, "whoever has laid down for himself the same rule of integrity, is actuated by the same purity of motive as I myself am."

8. WORKETH DECEIT, as in lii. 2.

BE ESTABLISHED, or "abide," "continue:" comp. cii. 28.

9. EVERY MORNING. Fast as the evil springs under shelter of the darkness, it shall be destroyed with the returning light. The allusion is, doubtless, to the Oriental custom of holding courts of law in the early morning. (See the same allusion in

Jer. xxi. 12. "Execute judgement in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled," &c. and comp. Luke xxii. 66; John xviii. 28.)

Day by day will he exercise his work of righteous judgement, purging out all ungodliness from the Holy City. His zeal is like the zeal of Phinehas, a zeal for God and for His honour. He will have a pure state, a pure city, as the writer of the 104th Psalm hopes to see a pure earth (civ. 35), without spot or stain of sin. It is like the dream which fascinated the Roman Poet, of an *Astræa redux*. It is a hope which finds its accomplishment in the Apocalyptic vision, in that new Jerusalem into which "there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." (Rev. xxi. 27.)

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## PSALM CII.

THIS Psalm must have been written by one of the exiles in Babylon, probably towards the close of the Captivity, when the hope of a return seemed no longer doubtful. In mournful strains he de-

scribes his bitter lot. Sorrow and pain had been very busy with him. His very heart was smitten within him, as the grass is withered in the hot eye of the sun. He was alone, with no friend to comfort him; his enemies turned his misery into a proverb; his life was drawing to a close under the heavy wrath of God.

But when he has time to look away from his sorrow, a prospect so bright and so glorious opens before him, that in the thought of it all else is swallowed up and forgotten. Zion's deliverance is at hand. Her God has not forsaken her. The grounds on which his hope rests are broad and manifold; for Jehovah is the everlasting King (ver. 12); the time fixed in His counsels is come (ver. 13); the hearts of her children are moved with a more passionate longing for her restoration (ver. 14); the prayer of His suffering people has prevailed, the sighing of the prisoner has entered into His ears (ver. 17, 19, 20). A new nation shall be born in Zion, and other nations and kingdoms shall be gathered into her to praise Jehovah (ver. 18, 21, 22).

Once again, as for a moment, the sadness of the exile and the sufferer prevails. His life is ebbing away, his heart and his flesh fail. Shall he be permitted to look upon that glory with the thought of which he has been comforting himself, the vision of which has been passing before his eyes? "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days!" is the natural and touching petition which breaks from his lips, as he fears lest his eyes should be closed in death before that glory appears. And then suddenly, as if every cloud of apprehension were dispelled, he triumphs in the thought that there is One who changeth not; that though the solid frame of the universe itself should crumble into dissolution, yet He is the same "yesterday, to-day, and for ever," the one Hope and Stay of His children now and in all generations to come.

On the Messianic character of the Psalm, and the quotation made from it in the Epistle to the Hebrews, see the remarks at the end on ver. 25—27.

The Psalm is clearly individual, not national, and must have been intended for private rather than liturgical use, as the Inscription seems designed to inform us. This Inscription is peculiar; it stands quite alone among the Titles prefixed to the Psalms; for it describes the character of the Psalm, and marks the circumstances under which it should be used. In all other instances the Inscriptions are either musical or historical.

[A PRAYER OF THE AFFLICTED, WHEN HE IS OVERWHELMED, AND BEFORE JEHOVAH POURETH OUT HIS COMPLAINT.]

- 1 O JEHOVAH, hear my prayer,  
And let my cry come unto Thee.
- 2 Hide not Thy face from me ;  
In the day of my distress incline Thine ear unto me,  
In the day that I call answer me speedily.
- 3 For my days are consumed in smoke,  
And my bones are burnt up as a firebrand.
- 4 My heart is smitten, and dried up like grass,  
For I have forgotten to eat my bread.
- 5 Because of the voice of my groaning,  
My bones have cleaved to my flesh.
- 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness,  
I am become like an owl of the ruins.
- 7 I have watched, and have been,

1, 2. The opening words are such as are found in other Psalms : comp. xviii. 6 ; xxxix. 12 ; xxvii. 9 ("hide not Thy face") ; lix. 16 ("In the day when I was in distress"), and xviii. 6 ; xxxi. 2 ("incline Thine ear unto me") ; lvi. 9 ("In the day when I call") ; lxix. 17 ; cxliii. 7 ("answer me speedily"). But all these are forms of expression which would easily pass into the common language of prayer.

3. MY BONES. The bones are burned (see on lxix. 3) as the brand is when placed on the fire. Comp. xxii. 15, xxxi. 10, xxxii. 3.

4. SMITTEN, as by a sun-stroke. Comp. cxi. 6 ; Hos. ix. 16 ; Jon. iv. 8.

5. TO MY FLESH. More naturally in Lam. iv. 8, "Their *skin* cleaveth to their bones ;" the expression denoting extreme emaciation. In Job xix. 20, however, it is "my bone cleaveth to my skin," which may refer to a state of weakness and relaxation brought on by severe pain, in which the bones have lost their power of motion.

6. A PELICAN (E. V. Cormorant) . . . AN OWL. Both are mentioned Lev. xi. 17, 18, and the former as inhabiting the wilderness, Zeph. ii. 14 ; Is. xxxiv. 11. The owl is called in Arabic, "mother of the ruins."

7. I HAVE WATCHED, sleep having been driven away by sorrow. With

Like a lonely bird on the house-top.

8 All the day have mine enemies reproached me,  
They that are mad against me have made their oaths  
by me.

9 For I have eaten ashes like bread,  
And mingled my drink with weeping,

10 Because of Thine indignation and Thy wrath,  
For Thou hast taken me up and cast me away.

11 My days are like a shadow that declineth,  
And I am withered like grass.

12 But THOU, O Jehovah, sittest throned for ever,

the next clause of the verse may be compared Virg. *Æn.* iv. 462 :—

“Solaque culminibus ferali carmine  
bubo

Visa queri, et longas in fletum ducere voces.”

And *Georg.* i. 403 :—

——“De culmine summo

Nequicquam seros exercet noctua  
cantus.”

Ovid also has—

“In adverso nocturnus culmine bubo.”

8. MADE THEIR OATHS BY ME, *i.e.* when they curse, choose me as an example of misery, and imprecate upon themselves or others my misfortunes—say, “God do to me, to thee, as He has done to this man.” Comp. Is. lxxv. 15 ; Jer. xxix. 22.

9. ASHES LIKE BREAD, Lam. iii. 16. Comp. Ps. xlii. 3, “my tears are my food,” lxxx. 5.

10. “The acknowledgement is the same as in xc. 7—9. It is sin which has thus provoked God’s displeasure ; the two nouns, ‘indignation’ and ‘wrath,’ are in the Hebrew the strongest which the language possesses.”—*Delitzsch.*

THOU HAST TAKEN ME UP, &c. God’s wrath has seized and whirled

him aloft, only to cast him, as worthless, away. So in Is. xxii. 18, “He will toss thee like a ball into a large country.”

11. THAT DECLINETH. The word is used properly of the day at its close (as in Jud. xix. 9), or the sun as setting, and so here transferred to the evening shadows (comp. cix. 23), which would strictly be said to *lengthen*. The figure describes the near approach of death.

12. BUT THOU. This is the great consolatory thought by which he rises above his sorrow. He, the individual, may perish, but Zion’s hopes rest on her Eternal King. And yet this might seem, as Calvin remarks, a far-fetched consolation. What is it to us that God changeth not, that He sitteth King for ever, if meanwhile our condition is so frail and feeble that we cannot continue for a moment in one stay? His unchangeable peace and blessedness do but make our life seem the more complete mockery. But the Psalmist recalls God’s promises to His Church, especially that great covenant promise, “I will dwell in the midst of you” (Exod. xxv. 8). Resting on this, he feels sure that God’s children, however miserable their state, shall have their share in that heavenly glory wherein God dwelleth. Because God changes not,

And Thy memorial is to all generations.

13 THOU wilt arise (and) have compassion upon Zion,  
For it is time to have pity upon her,  
For the set time is come.

14 For Thy servants find pleasure in her stones,  
And have pity upon her dust.

15 And the nations shall fear the Name of Jehovah,  
And all the kings of the earth Thy glory,

16 Because Jehovah hath built Zion :

He hath appeared in His glory ;

17 He hath turned to the prayer of the poor-destitute,  
And hath not despised their prayer.

18 This shall be written for the generation to come,

His promise and covenant change not, and therefore we may ever lift our eyes to His throne in heaven, from which He will surely stretch forth His hand to us.

SITTEST THRONED, as in ix. 7, xxix. 10.

THY NAME, lit. "Thy memorial," as in Exod. iii. 15.

13. Because God is eternal therefore He will have compassion on Zion. Or we may connect this verse with the following: THOU, Jehovah, the covenant God and our Father, wilt rebuild the walls of Zion, for even *we* her children love her very dust.

THE SET TIME. See on lxxv. 2. It is not necessary to understand this definitely of the seventy years prophesied by Jeremiah, xxv. 11, 12, xxix. 10. It is rather the time when her warfare is accomplished.

14. STONES . . . DUST. It is strange that Luther and others should have understood these of the materials for building the new city. They evidently denote the ruins of the old. (Neh. iv. 2, 10.)

HAVE PITY UPON HER DUST. Zion was not only dear to them in

her glory, when the splendour of her Temple riveted every eye; but her very dust is sacred, her very ruins are dear. "*Quamvis subversum sit templum, et deformis tantum vastitas illuc appareat, fideles tamen, in ejus amore manere defixos, in putridis lapidibus et corrupto cæmento agnoscere Dei gloriam.*"—*Calvin*. And then he applies all this to the spiritual Zion, the Church, bidding us remember that the more mournful her desolations, the less should we cease to love her; yea, rather, the more earnestly should our sighs and prayers go up on her behalf.

15. The effect produced on the heathen world by the manifestation of God's glory, as seen in the redemption and restoration of His people, which is not only the accomplishment of a sovereign purpose, but vouchsafed in answer to prayer.

17. POOR-DESTITUTE. I have retained this rendering of the P.B.V. because the word expresses utter nakedness and destitution. The Hebrew word only occurs here and Jer. xvii. 6.

18. SHALL BE WRITTEN. The



- And a people new-created shall praise Jah.  
 19 For He hath looked down from His holy height,  
 From heaven hath Jehovah beheld the earth,  
 20 That He might hear the sighing of the prisoner,  
 That He might set at liberty those that are doomed  
 to death,  
 21 That (men) may declare the name of Jehovah in Zion,  
 And His praise in Jerusalem,  
 22 When the peoples are gathered together,  
 And the kingdoms to serve Jehovah.  
 23 He hath brought down my strength in the way,  
 He hath shortened my days.  
 24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my  
 days ;—

only place in the Psalms where the memory of great events is said to be preserved in writing : elsewhere (as in xxii. 31, xlv. 1, lxxviii. 2) it is left to oral transmission.

A PEOPLE NEW-CREATED, or "a people to be created," as in xxii. 31, "a people that shall be born." There is, as Calvin remarks, an implied antithesis between the new creation of the people and their present destruction. "The return from the Captivity was like a second birth." See Cicero (*Ep. ad Att.* vi. 6, § 4). "The passage strikingly teaches that even when the Church seems dead it can be created anew when God wills. Let us never therefore despair, but rest assured that He who created a world out of nothing, can also bring His Church out of the darkness of death."

19. HE HATH LOOKED. Comp. Deut. xxvi. 15.

20. DOOMED TO DEATH. Heb. "sons of death." See on lxxix. 11.

22. On this gathering of the nations in Jerusalem comp. xxii. 27, lxxviii.

32 ; Is. xlv. 14. It is a fulfilment of the prophecy in Gen. xlix. 10.

23. Again he returns to the contrast between his own weakness and the brevity of human life, on the one hand, and the eternity and unchangeableness of God on the other (see above, ver. 11, 12), finding in this last his perfect satisfaction and rest.

IN THE WAY, *i.e.* in the journey of life. Those who suppose the Psalm to express the feelings rather of the nation at large than of the individual, see here an allusion to the journey through the wilderness, as in Exod. xviii. 8 ; Numb. xvi. 12, 13, xx. 14.

24. The abrupt transition in this verse is full of pathetic beauty. The prayer that his life may not be prematurely cut short seems to spring in this instance not merely from a natural clinging to life (as in Hezekiah's case, Is. xxxviii. 10, 11), but from the intense desire to see God's glory manifested in Israel's restoration. Then, having uttered that prayer, without waiting for the answer, he magnifies God's eternity and un-

- Thy years are to all generations.  
 25 Of old Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth,  
 And the heavens are the work of Thy hands :  
 26 They shall perish, but Thou remainest,  
 And all of them shall wax old as a garment,  
 As a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall  
 be changed ;  
 27 But THOU art the same,  
 And Thy years shall not come to an end.  
 28 The children of Thy servant shall continue,

changeableness. He finds in these his strength in weakness ; he feels that he can rest on the Everlasting Arms. He draws his highest consolation from the thought, that though he himself may perish, cut off in the midst of his days ; though the heavens and the earth may be changed, and wax old as a garment ; yet He who created them is ever the same, that His purposes cannot be frustrated, that His Church, the children of His servants, shall abide, the witness and the monument of His love.

25. The *creation* of the world implies its transitoriness. That which had a beginning shall have an end. He alone who created all cannot change. Comp. Is. li. 6, liv. 10. Elsewhere the order of nature is spoken of as unchanging, as in cxlviii. 6. Comp. Gen. viii. 22. And such expressions occur as "the everlasting mountains," "the everlasting heavens;" but as *compared with God* all that is most abiding has upon it the impress of decay and death. On the other hand, there is nothing here which contradicts the promise made elsewhere of "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pet. iii. 13).

27. THOU (ART) THE SAME, lit. "Thou art He." Comp. the same form of expression, Is. xli. 4, xlvi. 4.

Or in a different sense, as in Deut. xxxii. 39, "I am He," *i.e.* I am God. I am Jehovah, the only true God. comp. Is. xliii. 10, 13, xlviii. 12, li. 6 ; and see Nehem. ix. 6, "Thou art He, Jehovah alone," &c.

28. DWELL, *i.e.* in the land, as in xxxvii. 29, lxix. 36, where the full expression occurs.

Verses 25—27 are quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 10—12) as addressed to Christ, and form a part of the writer's proof from the Old Testament that He, as the Son of God, is higher than the angels. The quotation stands between two others, one from the 45th, the other from the 110th Psalm, bearing on the same argument. But these are both of them Messianic Psalms, and the principle on which the quotation rests is sufficiently obvious. It is by no means so easy to understand why the words of this Psalm should have been quoted, as it does not seem at first sight to be a Messianic Psalm. It may be observed, however, (1) that it is in this sense Messianic, that it looks forward to Israel's redemption from captivity, and the future glory of Zion ; (2) that, as has been observed in the note on Ps. lxxii., there are two great lines of Messianic hope running through the Psalms, the one human, the other

And their seed shall be established before Thee.

divine ; the one of which the reign of the Son of David, the other of which the advent of Jehovah, is the great end and object. Here the Psalmist is occupied with the latter, the appearing of Jehovah in His glory. (3) This identification of the Jesus of the New Testament with the Jehovah of the Old is what we find elsewhere ; comp. John xii. 41 with Is. vi. (Isaiah sees the glory of Jehovah, St. John tells us it was the glory of Christ), and John xix. 37, "they shall look on Him whom they pierced," which in Zech. xii. 10 is language used

directly of Jehovah. The difference between these quotations in St. John and the one in the Ep. to the Hebrews is, that *the argument* in the latter *requires* that the Messianic character of the Psalm should be conceded. (4) Not only the revelation, the *appearing* of Jehovah in Zion, but also the creation of the world (ver. 25) would point to the Great Mediator, the Eternal World, as the person here spoken of, and on this last ground, especially, the quotation in the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to rest.

## PSALM CIII.

THIS beautiful Psalm is the outpouring of a full heart in thanksgiving to Jehovah for His grace and compassion, both as experienced by the Psalmist in his own life, and also as manifested to his nation in their history. It celebrates especially God's mercy in the forgiveness of sin, and that tender pity, as of a human father, wherewith He remembers the frailty, and stoops to the weakness, of His children. It is a hymn of which the text and motto are to be found in that revelation of Himself which God gave to Moses when He proclaimed Himself as "Jehovah, tenderly compassionate and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exod. xxxiv. 6).

Nothing certain can be said as to the author and date of the Psalm, though various conjectures have been hazarded.

The Psalm consists of three parts :—

1. A prelude, in a strain of trustful gladness, in which the Psalmist seeks to stir up gratitude within him, by the review of God's mercies to him as an individual. Ver. 1—5.

II. The body of the Poem, in a more reflective tone, full of a quiet, tender, pathetic, even melancholy beauty, in which, after a brief allusion to the facts of the national history, the great covenant relationship of God to His people, forms the prominent ground of hope amid human sins and transitoriness. Ver. 6—18.

III. A triumphant conclusion. Joy in the remembrance of God's goodness to himself and his people predominates over every other feeling. Such a joy must utter itself in praise. Praise seems its natural employment, and therefore the natural employment of all other creatures which it summons to a holy sympathy and fellowship with itself. Ver. 19—22.

[(A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

- 1 BLESS Jehovah, O my soul,  
And all that is within me (bless) His holy Name.
- 2 Bless Jehovah, O my soul,  
And forget not all His benefits ;
- 3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquity,  
Who healeth all thy diseases,

1. ALL THAT IS WITHIN ME ; not as opposed to outward or mere lip service, but expressing the desire to enlist every thought, faculty, power, the heart with all his affections, the will, the conscience, the reason, in a word the whole spiritual being, all in man that is best and highest, in the same heavenly service.

2. FORGET NOT. This touches the secret spring of so much ingratitude : —forgetfulness, the want of recollection, or gathering together again of all the varied threads of mercy. Comp. Deut. vi. 12, viii. 11, 14.

3. FORGIVETH, the first and greatest of all the Divine benefits to the soul burdened with a sense of guilt and defilement : therefore also that which calls first for acknowledgement. "God's benefits will not be before our eyes, unless our sins be also before our eyes."—*Augustine*.

DISEASES or "sicknesses," primarily, at least, of body, as in Deut. xxix. 22 ; 2 Chron. xxi. 19 : and this agrees with what follows ; though possibly the maladies of the soul may be included. "Even when sin is forgiven," says Augustine, "thou still carriest about with thee an infirm body . . . Death is not yet swallowed up in victory, this corruptible hath not yet put on incorruption, still the soul herself is shaken by passions and temptations. . . [But] thy sicknesses shall all be healed, doubt it not. They are great, thou wilt say ; but the physician is greater. To an Omnipotent Physician no sickness is incurable ; only suffer thyself to be healed, thrust not away His hand, He knoweth what He doeth. . . . A human physician is mistaken sometimes ; why ? Because he did not make that which he undertakes to

- 4 Who redeemeth thy life from the pit,  
 Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies,  
 5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good (things),  
 So that thy youth renews itself as the eagle.  
 6 Jehovah executeth righteousness  
 And judgement for all that are oppressed.

heal. God made thy body. God made thy soul; He knoweth how to re-create that which He created; He knoweth how to re-form that which he formed; only be thou still under the hands of the Physician . . . suffer thou His hands, O soul that blestest Him, forgetting not all His benefits: for He healeth all thy sicknesses."

4. FROM THE PIT (see on xvi. 10); including death, the grave, Hades. The Targum renders, "from Gehenna."

CROWNETH. The love of God not only delivers from sin, disease, and death. He makes His children kings, and weaves their crown out of His own glorious attributes of loving-kindness and tender mercies.

5. SATISFIETH. Giving Himself to us as the bread of life. Augustine observing that every creature has its own good: "Seek thine own good, O soul. *None is good but one, that is God.* The highest good, that is my good. What, then, can he want who hath the highest good? . . . God is this good. What kind of good, who

can say? Behold we cannot say, and yet we are not permitted to be silent."

AS THE EAGLE: *i.e.* so that in strength and vigour thou art like the eagle. The rendering of the E. V., "so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's," is grammatically justifiable, but very unnecessarily makes the Psalmist responsible for the fable of the eagle's renewing its youth.\* Neither this passage nor Is. xl. 31 countenances any such fable. There is an allusion, no doubt, to the yearly moulting of the feathers of the eagle and other birds, the eagle being selected as the liveliest image of strength and vigour. The P. B. V. gives the sense rightly: "Making thee young and lusty as an eagle."

6. He passes from his own experience to that of the Church at large: God's mercies to the individual are only a part of that vast circle of mercy which embraces all Israel.

ALL THAT ARE OPPRESSED; the Church of God being a suffering Church.

\* The fable of the eagle's renewing its youth has received different embellishments. The version of Saadia, given by Kimchi, is as follows: The eagle mounts aloft into heaven till he comes near to the seat of central fire in the sun, when, scorched by the heat, he casts himself down into the sea. Thence he emerges again with new vigour and fresh plumage, till at last in his hundredth year he perishes in the waves. Augustine's story is more elaborate and far less poetical. According to him, when the eagle grows old, the upper curved portion of the beak becomes so enlarged, that the bird is unable to open its mouth to seize its prey. It would die of hunger, therefore, did it not dash this part of its beak against a rock till the troublesome excrescence is got rid of. Then it can devour its food as before, vigour is restored to its body, splendour to its plumage, it can soar aloft; a kind of resurrection has taken place. Thus it renews its youth. And then, wonderful to say, having told this story gravely, he makes Christ the rock, adding, "in Christ thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's."

- 7 He hath made known His ways unto Moses,  
His acts unto the children of Israel.
- 8 Jehovah is full of compassion and gracious,  
Long-suffering and plenteous in loving-kindness.
- 9 He will not alway be contending,  
Neither keepeth He (His anger) for ever.
- 10 Not according to our sins hath He dealt with us,  
And not according to our iniquities hath He requited  
us ;
- 11 For as high as heaven is above the earth,  
So mighty is His loving-kindness upon them that fear  
Him.
- 12 As far as the East is from the West,  
So far hath He removed our transgressions from us.
- 13 Like as a father hath compassion on his children,  
So Jehovah hath compassion on them that fear Him.
- 14 For He knoweth our frame,  
He remembereth that we are dust.

7. HIS WAYS, in allusion to the prayer of Moses, *Exod. xxxiii. 13* : "If I have found grace in Thy sight, make known to me Thy way, and let me know Thee."

8. The verse is taken from *Exod. xxxiv. 6*. *Comp. lxxxvi. 5, 15, cxi. 4, cxlv. 8; Joel ii. 13; Nchem. ix. 17, 31.*

9. *Comp. Is. lvii. 16*, "For not for ever will I contend, and not perpetually will I be angry; for the spirit would fail before me, and the souls that I have made."

KEEPETH. See the same absolute use of the verb, *Lev. xix. 18*, "Thou shalt not keep (*i.e.* cherish any grudge) against the children of thy people;" *Nah. i. 2*; and of the synonymous word (*shâmar*) *Jer. iii. 5, 12*. Calvin compares the French phrases *il lui garde, il me l'a gardé*.

11. The expressions in *xxxvi. 5*,

*lvii. 10*, are similar. God's love is like Himself, infinite. It cannot be measured by all the measures of the universe.

12. REMOVED OUR TRANSGRESSIONS. The forgiveness of sin (as in *ver. 3*) is the great proof of God's love. "The expression describes, in language which might be that of the N. T., the effects of justifying grace." —*Del. Comp. Micah vii. 19*, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea;" *Is. xxxviii. 17*, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back."

14—16. Man's weakness and transitoriness is itself an appeal to God's fatherly compassion. Compare *Gen. viii. 21*, and see the same ground taken in *Ps. xxxix. 5, 13, lxxviii. 39; Job vii. 7*.

14. OUR FRAME, *lit.* "our fashioning," as in *Gen. ii. 7*, "And He

- 15 As for frail man, his days are as grass:  
     As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.  
 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone,  
     And the place thereof knoweth it no more.  
 17 But the loving-kindness of Jehovah is from everlasting  
     to everlasting upon them that fear Him,  
     And His righteousness to children's children;  
 18 To such as keep His covenant,  
     And to those that remember His precepts to do them.  
 19 Jehovah hath established His throne in the heavens,  
     And His kingdom ruleth over all.  
 20 O bless Jehovah, ye His angels,  
     That are mighty in strength, that execute His word,  
     Hearkening to the voice of His word.

*fashioned* (formed) man of the dust," &c.; or as a potter moulds and fashions the clay, Is. xxix. 16, xlv. 9, 11; Job x. 8.

15. Compare, for the figures in this and the next verse, xxxvii. 2, 10, 36, xc. 5, 6; Is. xl. 6—8, li. 12; Job xiv. 2; and for the phrase, "the place thereof knoweth it no more," Job vii. 10.

17. The same contrast between man's transitoriness and God's unchangeableness which occurs in Psalm xc. For the third time God's mercy and loving-kindness is said to be upon "them that fear Him" (comp. ver. 11—13), as if to remind us that there is a love within a love—a love which they only know who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, who fear Him and walk in His ways, as well as a love which "maketh the sun to shine, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." In the next verse there is the same limitation, "To such as keep His covenant," and to those who not only know, but "*do*" His will. The blessings of

the covenant are no inalienable right. Children's children can only inherit its blessings by cleaving to it. Comp. Exod. xx. 6, xxiv. 7; Deut. vii. 9.

19. The concluding portion of the Psalm extols the greatness and majesty of Him who has thus stooped in pity to His children. The Psalmist had begun by calling upon his own soul to bless Jehovah for His goodness; he had associated with himself, as partakers in that goodness, all who feared the Lord. Now he concludes by calling on the angels in heaven and all creation, inanimate as well as animate, to ascribe blessing and honour and power to Him who sitteth upon the throne. Lastly, from all that vast congregation of worshippers praising God, he turns to himself, that his voice may not be wanting in the mighty anthem, "Bless thou Jehovah, O my soul."

20. MIGHTY IN STRENGTH, or "strong warriors" (see note on lii. 1), as afterwards "all His *hosts*," by which not the stars but the angels are meant, as is plain from the paral-

- 21 Bless ye Jehovah, all His hosts,  
 Ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure.  
 22 Bless Jehovah, all His works,  
 In all places of His dominion.  
 Bless Jehovah, O my soul.

lelism, "ye ministers of His that do His pleasure." See also Ps. civ. 4; Dan. vii. 10.

way in Ps. cxlviii. first the angels and then the whole creation is called upon to praise God.

22. ALL HIS WORKS. In the same

## PSALM CIV.

THE general argument of this Divine Ode of Creation has been well expressed by Calvin. "This Psalm," he says, "differs from the last, in that it neither treats of God's special mercies bestowed on His Church, nor lifts us to the hope of a heavenly life; but painting for us in the frame of the world, and the order of nature, the living image of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, exhorts us to praise Him, because in this our frail mortal life He manifests Himself to us as a Father." It is a bright and living picture of God's creative power, pouring life and gladness throughout the universe.

There are several points in the Psalmist's treatment of his subject which deserve especial notice.

1. First there is here, what is not to be found to the same extent, if at all, in any other ancient poetry, the distinct recognition of the absolute dependence of the universe, as created, upon the Creator. "He is before all things, and by Him all things subsist." This truth is throughout implied. It forms the very basis, and, so to speak, main thread of the Poem.

2. Secondly, the great work of creation is here regarded not as a thing of the past merely: the Universe is not a machine once set a-going, and then left to its fate or to inexorable laws. The Great



Worker is ever working.\* “The world and all things owe their past origin and their present form to the continuous operation” of God. Creation ever repeats itself; death is succeeded by life. He who made, renews the face of the earth. It is the same profound view of the relation of the Cosmos to the Creator, which St. Paul exhibits in his speech on Mars’ hill. He, too, is careful not to separate the past from the present. “God, who *made* the world,” did not then leave the work of His fingers: the streaming forth of His Omnipotence and His Love was not checked or stayed; on the contrary, every part of His creation rests at every moment on His hands; “He *giveth* to all life and breath, and all things” (Acts xvii. 25).

3. Thirdly, in its main outline the Poem follows the story of Creation contained in the first chapter of Genesis. There manifestly is the source whence the Psalmist drew. Meditating on that sublime description, itself a poem, he finds in it his subject and his inspiration. And yet the Psalm is not a mere copy of the original. Breathing the same lofty spirit, it has a force and an originality of its own. In some respects the Psalm, even more strikingly than the early record, exhibits the infinite greatness, the order, the life of the Universe. But the creation of Genesis is a creation of the past; the creation of the Psalm is a creation of the present. The one portrays the beginning of the eternal order, the other its perpetual, living spectacle. Hence, too, the Ode has far more animation than the Record. The latter is a picture of still life; the former is crowded with figures full of life and movement. How vivid are the images which it calls up!—the wild ass roaming the sands of the wilderness, stooping to slake his thirst at the stream which God has provided; the birds building their nests, and breaking forth into song in the trees which fringe the margin of the torrent-beds; the wild goats bounding from rock to rock, and finding their home in the inaccessible crags; the young lions filling the forest by night with their roar, and “seeking from God their prey;” and the sea with the same plenitude of life, its depths peopled with huge monsters and swarming myriads of lesser fish, and its surface studded with sails, the image of the enterprise, the traffic, the commerce of the world; and lastly, in fine contrast with this merely animal activity of creatures led by their appetites, the even tenour, the

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\* See the excellent remarks on the importance of this view of nature in reference to miracles, in the Rev. D. J. Vaughan’s valuable work *Christian Evidences and the Bible*, p. 97.

calm unobtrusive dignity of man's daily life of labour : take all these together, and we have a picture which, for truth and depth of colouring, for animation, tenderness, beauty, has never been surpassed.

It is not surprising that this great Hymn of Creation should have called forth the warmest expressions of admiration from those who have studied it, and that they should have vied with one another in praising it as a masterpiece which has rarely been exceeded. One writer\* "prefers it to all the lyric poetry of the Greeks and Romans." Another† declares that "in Hebrew poetry there is little that can compare with it in precision of outline, and in the delicacy of its transitions, as well as in its warm sympathy with nature, and in the beauty of its images."

The Psalm is without any strophical division, but its main outline, as has been said, follows the first chapter of Genesis. The Poet begins with the light, and the heaven with its clouds and storms, ver. 2—4, corresponding to the works of the First and Second Days, Gen. i. 3—8. Then he passes to the earth, first describing its original chaotic state, and the separation of earth and water by the voice of God, ver. 5—9, in accordance with Gen. i. 9, 10 (first portion of the Third Day's work); and then the varied adornment of the earth as the dwelling-place of living creatures, in a strain which goes far beyond the narrative in Gen. i. 11, 12. The mention of the heavenly bodies follows, ver. 19—23 (Fourth Day's work), but with a more direct reference to the life of men and animals than in Gen. i. 14—18. Then, after a short exclamation of admiring gratitude, ver. 24, the Poet, who has already woven into his verse so happily some portion of the creative wonders of the Fifth and Sixth Days, the birds and beasts, and creeping things, and man, Gen. i. 20—26, turns back again, ver. 25, 26, to speak of the sea and its life, Gen. i. 21. Finally, after expressing, in vivid phrase, the absolute dependence of all this vast and manifold creation upon its Maker, ver. 27—30, he longs to see the bright original restored, to find himself and all God's creatures parts of the mighty harmony, that a new sabbath of creation may dawn, a rest of God, in which He shall rejoice in His works and they in Him, and the world become a temple filled with the anthem of praise, ver. 31—35.

\* Hupfeld.

† Amyraldus.

1 BLESS Jehovah, O my soul !

O Jehovah my God, Thou art very great,

Thou art clothed with honour and majesty,

2 Thou coverest Thyself with light as with a garment,

Thou spreadest out the heavens like a curtain,

3 Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters,

1. CLOTHED, comp. xciii. 1.

2. THOU COVEREST THYSELF, lit. "covering Thyself" (and in the next member "spreading out"). These expressions give a present force to God's creative action, and teach us to regard it not merely as a thing of the past, but as still operative. The fifth verse, on the other hand, opening with a past tense, takes us back to the original creation of all things.

WITH LIGHT. This is the First Day. At the creation God *said*, "Let there be light." Here, where the creation is an ever-continued work, He *apparels* Himself with light. The final revelation tells us that "God is Light," 1 John i. 5 ; comp. John i. 4—9.

"In comparing the light to a robe," says Calvin, "he signifies that, though God is invisible, yet His glory is manifest. If we speak of His essential being, it is true that He dwelleth in light inaccessible ; but inasmuch as He irradiates the whole world with His glory, this is a robe wherein He in some measure appears to us as visible, who in Himself had been hidden."

SPREADST OUT THE HEAVENS. The same figure in Is. xl. 22 (comp. xlii. 5 ; xliv. 24). This describes briefly the work of the Second Day, Gen. i. 6—8. The heavens are the firmament, the expanse (as the Hebrew word literally means) which is spread out to separate the waters. And in the waters above God lays, as it were, the floor of His palace.

LIKE A CURTAIN, *i.e.* the curtain of a tent.

Both Athanasius and Augustine observe, that in the use of this figure the Psalmist designs to mark not merely the form of the heaven, but the ease with which God works. "For easy as it is," says the former, "for a man to stretch out a skin, so easy is it for God to create the heaven which did not exist before." Augustine : "What infinite labour, and toil, and difficulty, and continued effort it costs to spread out one little room ; there is no effort of this kind in the works of God. Thou art not to think that God spread out the heaven as thou spreadest out the roof of thy house ; but as easy as it is for thee to spread out a single skin, so easy was it for God to spread out that vast heaven. . . . Nay, God did not spread out the heaven as thou spreadest out the skin. For let a skin, wrinkled or folded, be placed before thee, and command it to be unfolded and stretched out ; spread it out by the word. 'I cannot,' thou wilt reply. See then how far thou comest short of the ease with which God worketh."

3. WHO LAYETH THE BEAMS. The figures, as Calvin remarks, are all designed to teach the same truth, viz. that we are not to pierce heaven in order to discover God, because He meets us in His world and presents everywhere living pictures to our eyes. We must not suppose that anything was added to Him by the creation of

- Who maketh the clouds His chariot,  
 Who walketh upon the wings of the wind;  
 4 Who maketh His messengers winds,  
 His ministers a flaming fire.  
 5 He established the earth upon the foundations thereof,

the world; it is for our sakes that He puts on this garment.

HIS CHAMBERS, lit. "upper chambers," *ὑπερφῶνα*, built on the flat roof of the Eastern houses. For the literal use of the word, see for instance 2 Kings iv. 10; for the figurative, as here, Am. ix. 6, and comp. Jer. xxii. 13, 14.

IN THE WATERS, *i.e.* the waters above the firmament, Gen. i. 7. It is impossible not to admire the boldness of the figure.

4. Some of the ablest of the recent commentators have rendered this verse:

"Who maketh the winds His messengers,  
 The flaming fire His ministers;"

and had the construction of the sentence in Hebrew permitted it, I should have no hesitation in preferring this rendering. It would seem to be the natural sense of the words, and that which harmonizes best with the context. But unless the grammatical difficulty can be removed, we must render "He maketh His messengers winds," &c., *i.e.* "He clothes His messengers with the might, the swiftness, the all-pervading subtilty of wind and fire." This is far better than to explain that God's messengers (or angels) are the secret agents who assume the forms of wind and lightning, in order to accomplish His will, that what we see working around us are not blind forces of nature, but beings to whom natural objects are a veil concealing their operation. This view has no apparent support

in Scripture, though it has been illustrated with great beauty of language by Dr. Newman in his Sermon on the Feast of St. Michael: "But how do the wind and water, earth and fire move? Now, here Scripture interposes, and seems to tell us that all this wonderful harmony is the work of Angels. Those events which we ascribe to chance, as the weather, or to nature, as the seasons, are duties done to that God who maketh His Angels to be winds, and His Ministers a flame of fire. . . . Thus, whenever we look abroad we are reminded of those most gracious and holy Beings, the servants of the Holiest, who deign to minister to the heirs of salvation. Every breath of air, and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God in heaven."

5. The work of the Third Day in its two great divisions: first, the separation of the land and water (ver. 5—9); next, the clothing of the earth with grass, herbs, and trees (ver. 10—18). The Poet, however, ranges beyond the first creation, and peoples the earth with the living creatures of the Fifth Day. It is not a picture of still life like that in Genesis, but a living, moving, animated scene.

HE ESTABLISHED. God's order is itself the surest prop.

UPON THE FOUNDATIONS THEREOF. Comp. Job xxxviii. 4—6; Prov. viii. 29. On the other hand, in Job xxvi. 7, God is said to "hang

- That it should not be moved for ever and ever.  
 6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment,  
 Above the mountains did the waters stand.  
 7 At Thy rebuke they fled,  
 At the voice of Thy thunder they were scattered,  
 8 The mountains rose, the valleys sank,—  
 To the place which Thou hadst established for them.  
 9 Thou hast set them a bound that they can not pass,

the earth upon nothing." Mendelssohn gets rid of the figure here by rendering "Thou hast established the earth in herself," but it must be a dull mind which needs thus to be guarded against misapprehension. Yet it is curious to see how these obvious figures have been strained, and a hard literal, prosaic sense given to what is manifestly poetry. This was one of the passages which, according to Father Sanchez, was most strongly relied upon in the controversy with Galileo.

6—8. These verses hang together in construction, and are a poetical expansion of Gen. i. 9.

6. The original chaos is described not according to the heathen notion, as a confused mass, earth and water mingled together, but the earth as already formed, yet completely enveloped in the water. The "earth standing out of the water, and in the water," 2 Pet. iii. 5. This vast swelling tumultuous sea hears the "rebuke" of God, and sinks to its appointed place; the earth appears, emerges from her watery covering, and shows her surface diversified with mountain and valley.

So Milton:—

"The earth was form'd, but in the womb as yet  
 Of waters, embryo immature involved,

Appear'd not: over all the face of earth  
 Main ocean flow'd."

7. Comp. lxxvii. 17—19. AT THY REBUKE; comp. xviii. 15; lxxvi. 6; Is. i. 2, and Matt. viii. 26.

8. THE MOUNTAINS ROSE, *i.e.* they seemed to rise as the waters subsided. Comp. Ovid, *Met.* i. 43:

"Jussit et extendi campos, subsidere valles,  
 Fronde tegi sylvas, lapidosos surgere montes;"

and 244:

"Flumina subsidunt, montes exire videntur,  
 Surgit humus, crescent loca, decre-scentibus undis."

And Milton:—

"Immediately the mountains huge appear  
 Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave  
 Into the clouds, their tops ascend the sky;  
 So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low  
 Down sunk a hollow bottom, broad and deep,  
 Capacious bed of waters," &c.

*Paradise Lost*, book vii.

9. A BOUND separating the sea from the land, as in Job xxxviii. 8—11. See for a wider view, extending

- That they turn not again to cover the earth ;  
 10 Who sendest forth springs along the torrent-beds,  
 They flow between the mountains,  
 11 They give drink to all the beasts of the field,  
 The wild asses quench their thirst.  
 12 Above them the fowls have their habitation,  
 They sing among the branches.  
 13 He watereth the mountains from His chambers ;  
 The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy work.  
 14 He maketh grass to grow for the cattle,

still further this separation of the elements, Job xxvi. 8—10, Prov. viii. 27, 29. Delitzsch says it might almost seem as if the Poet who wrote these words did not suppose the Flood to be universal, but it is far more probable that he is not thinking of the Flood, but only of the everlasting order first established at the creation, and afterwards confirmed in the covenant made with Noah, Gen. ix. 9—16.

10. The loving care, the tender sympathy with which God, clothing the earth with beauty, provides at the same time for the wants of all His creatures. Even the wild ass which shuns the approach of man, and the birds of heaven, which have no keeper, are not left unprovided for.

THE TORRENT-BEDS. The word (*nachal*) denotes both the torrent and the valley through which it flows, corresponding to the Arabic *Wady*.

11. QUENCH THEIR THIRST, lit. "break their thirst," a phrase which occurs only here. Comp. the Latin *frangere sitim*.

12. ABOVE THEM, or, "beside them." The banks of the streams and the valleys would first be clothed with trees, and there the foliage would be most luxuriant.

THE FOWLS OF HEAVEN (E. V. AIR), a frequent expression in Genesis, as in i. 30, ii. 19, &c.

13. God waters the earth not only by the fountains and torrents, but by the rain. Comp. Gen. ii. 5 and 10.

HE WATERETH, lit. "He giveth drink to," the same word as in ver. 11. The MOUNTAINS are mentioned not only because on them the clouds rest, from them the streams descend, but because Palestine was a mountain-land. Comp. Deut. xi. 11, "a land of mountains and of valleys, of the rain of heaven it drinketh water" (unlike Egypt, which was watered by the Nile). Thus doubly watered, from above and from beneath (comp. Gen. xlix. 25), the earth brings forth grass for the cattle, and its various fruits, corn and wine and oil for the use of men—for the cattle what they need, for man more than he needs—that which makes his heart glad and his countenance bright.

HIS CHAMBERS, the clouds, as in ver. 3, where they are built on the waters.

THE FRUIT OF THY WORK, *i.e.* apparently the rain, as seems to be required both by the parallelism and by the expression "the earth is satisfied."

14. GRASS. . . . GREEN HERB.

- And green herb for the service of man ;  
 That He may bring forth bread from the earth,  
 15 And that wine may make glad the heart of man,  
 And that oil may cause (his) face to shine,  
 And that bread may strengthen man's heart.  
 16 The trees of Jehovah are satisfied,  
 The cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted ;  
 17 Where the birds make their nests :  
 As for the stork, the cypresses are her house.  
 18 The high mountains are for the wild goats ;

Comp. Gen. i. 11, 29, 30 ; iii. 18 ; Ex. x. 12, the latter comprising not vegetables only, but corn, &c.

FOR THE SERVICE OF MAN. This seems the most natural interpretation, corresponding to "for the cattle" in the first member, and may be supported by the use of the word in 1 Chron. xxvi. 30.

BREAD in this verse seems to be used in its most general signification to denote all by which man is nourished. In the next verse it is mentioned in its proper sense, together with wine and oil, as the three most important products of the soil, the three essential elements of an Eastern banquet, the object being to set forth the *bounty* of God's provision for man. He furnishes no scanty table, He gives with no niggard hand.

15. From the satisfying of the earth by the precious rain, the Poet's thoughts turn to the satisfying of man by the earth. Not that man is the main subject, but rather the herbs and the trees ; only he passes for a moment from them to their chief uses, viz. for man, and for fowls, and for beasts.

AND THAT OIL, &c., lit. "And to cause (or, that He may cause) his face to shine with oil," the face being

mentioned rather than the head which was anointed, because the radiancy of joy is seen in the face.

STRENGTHEN MAN'S HEART, Gen. xviii. 5 ; Jud. xix. 5. Comp. Ps. cv. 16.

16. THE TREES OF JEHOVAH, so called, as planted, not by human hand, but by God Himself (as in the next member), trees of the forest and the mountain, in opposition to those which come under human cultivation, such as the vine and the olive, which are implied in ver. 15. See note on xxxvi. 6.

ARE SATISFIED, *i.e.* with the rain, as in ver. 13.

17. These trees have their use ; they are a home and a shelter for the birds—probably the larger birds are specially intended, as the stork is named, the smaller tribes of singing birds having already been mentioned, ver. 12.

THE STORK. The word means in Hebrew, "the pious, or affectionate bird."

18. THE HIGH MOUNTAINS and PRECIPICES or "cliffs" are mentioned, because they, like the trees, are a *shelter* for the wild animals. God provides food, and God provides shelter for His creatures.

The steep precipices are a refuge for the conies.

- 19 He hath made the moon for seasons ;  
     The sun knoweth his going down :  
 20 Thou makest darkness—and it is night,  
     Wherein all the beasts of the forest do move.  
 21 The young lions roar after their prey,  
     And seek their food from God :  
 22 The sun ariseth,—they get them away,  
     And lay them down in their dens.  
 23 Man goeth forth to his work,  
     And to his labour until the evening.  
 24 How manifold are Thy works, O Jehovah,  
     In wisdom hast Thou made them all :  
     The earth is full of Thy riches.  
 25 Yonder is the sea, great and broad,

CONIES. I have left the word as in the E. V., though incorrect. The creature meant is the *hyrax Syriacus*.

19. Transition to the work of the Fourth Day, but still so contrived as to introduce another picture of life upon the earth, and the contrast between the life of the night and the life of the day.

THE MOON mentioned first, because to the Hebrew mind the night naturally preceded the day, as throughout Gen. i., "And it was evening and it was morning." Hence we have first the night-scene, ver. 20, 21, and then the day-scene, ver. 22, 23.

FOR SEASONS, as in Gen. i. 14.

KNOWETH HIS GOING DOWN. Comp. Job xxxviii. 12 ; Jer. viii. 7. This mention of the sunset prefaces the way for the night-picture which follows.

20—23. Even the night has its busy life; the beasts of prey are abroad, and they, too, wait upon the providence of God. The whole

picture is finely conceived, and the contrast is perfect between the restless movement and roaring of the wild beasts, and man's calm life of labour, continued in the quiet light of day from morning till evening. All the other creatures wait upon God, in simple dependence upon Him; man must *labour*, as well as gather what God gives him, if he would be satisfied with good.

24. Having thus come to man, the crown of all creation, and so touched, as it were, by anticipation, on the work of the Sixth Day, the Psalmist pauses to review with grateful wonder the multitude of God's works, and the wisdom which is manifest in creation.

25. Then he remembers that there is one vast field of creative wonders of which as yet he has said nothing. The sea, too, has its life—a life in its depths, of things small and great—a life of the coral insect as well as of the whale and also a life on its surface, where "go the ships" carrying



- Wherein are things moving without number,  
 Beasts both small and great.
- 26 There go the ships,  
 (And there) leviathan whom Thou hast formed to  
 take his pastime therein.
- 27 All of them wait upon Thee,  
 That Thou mayest give them their food in its season.
- 28 That Thou givest them, they gather ;  
 Thou openest Thine hand, they are satisfied with  
 good ;
- 29 Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled ;  
 Thou takest away their breath, they die  
 And turn again to their dust.
- 30 Thou sendest forth Thy breath, they are created,

the thoughts and the passions, the skill and the enterprise of human hearts.

The way in which the sea is mentioned indicates a writer not living on the coast. It is visible, perhaps, but at a distance. Its monsters are not familiar objects, but are vaguely described as "leviathan."

26. LEVIATHAN; not here as in lxxiv. 14; Job, E. V. xli. 1, "the crocodile," but a general term for all "sea-monsters."

THEREIN, *i.e.* in the sea, the pronoun referring to the more remote noun. It is strange that Ewald should render "whom Thou hast made to play with him," and appeal to Job, E. V. xli. 5, as supporting the rendering. The Jewish tradition does indeed make Leviathan the plaything of the Almighty, but there is nothing of the kind in Scripture.

27, 28. In allusion, probably, to Gen. i. 29, 30.

27. WAIT UPON THEE. The verb occurs in the same sense and with the same construction, cxlv. 15.

IN ITS SEASON. Or the suffix may refer distributively to the animals (not

to the food): "to each one in his season," "at the fitting time."

28. GATHER. The word denotes properly "to pick up objects from the ground," as stones, flowers, ears of corn, grapes, wood, &c.; here, provender. There is no allusion to the gathering of the manna.

29, 30. God is not only the liberal and provident householder, the gracious father of a family. He is the Fountain of Life to His creatures. Comp. xxxvi. 8, 9.

29. THOU HIDEST THY FACE: a phrase elsewhere used to express God's wrath or displeasure; here in a physical sense, the withdrawal of His care.

TROUBLED. See the same expression, xxx. 7; and comp. Job xxiii. 15.

TURN AGAIN TO THEIR DUST, as in Gen. iii. 19. Job xxxiv. 15.

30. The reference can hardly be to Gen. ii. 7, where the inbreathing of life is confined exclusively to the creation of man, but rather to i. 2, where the Spirit of God is the great vivifying Agent in all Creation.

THOU SENDEST FORTH. Comp. Acts xvii. 25. THY BREATH. The

- And Thou renewest the face of the ground.  
 31 Let the glory of Jehovah be for ever!  
 Let Jehovah rejoice in His works!  
 32 Who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth,  
 When He toucheth the mountains, they smoke.  
 33 Let me sing to Jehovah, as long as I live,  
 Let me play unto my God, while I have my being.  
 34 Let my meditation be sweet unto Him:  
 As for me, I will rejoice in Jehovah.  
 35 Sinners shall be consumed out of the earth,  
 And the wicked shall be no more.  
 Bless Jehovah, O my soul!

same word in Hebrew may be rendered "breath" or "spirit." As the reference is here only to physical life, I have retained the former, especially as the same word is employed in the previous verse, where there can be no doubt as to the meaning. Comp. Job xxxiii. 4, xxxiv. 14, 15, Eccl. xii. 7, with Ps. cxlvi. 4. God is called "the God of the spirits of all flesh," Num. xvi. 22, xxvii. 16, Heb. xii. 9, and He "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," Acts xvii. 28.

THOU RENEWEST, life ever succeeding death, and all life being, as it were, a new creation.

"States fall, arts fade, but Nature does not die."

31. The Psalm closes with the prayer that the glory of that God who has thus manifested His glory in creation may endure for ever, and that He who looked with loving approbation upon His works when they were first created, pronouncing all "very good," may ever rejoice in them: for He is a God awful in His majesty, One whose look makes

the earth tremble, One whose touch consumes the mountains, One who could in a moment blot out the creation He has made.

33. And as the Psalmist utters the devout wish that God may rejoice in His works, so he utters the wish for himself that he may ever rejoice in God, that his thoughts and words may find acceptance with Him. This is the truest, highest harmony of creation; God finding pleasure in His creatures, His reasonable creatures finding their joy in Him. But this harmony has been rudely broken; the sweet notes of the vast instrument of the Universe are jangled out of tune. Sin is the discord of the world. Sin has changed the order (*κόσμος*) into disorder. Hence the prophetic hope (35) that sinners shall be consumed, that the wicked shall be no more, that thus the earth shall be purified, the harmony be restored, and God, once more, as at the first, pronounce His creation "very good." In the prospect of such a consummation, the Poet calls upon his own soul, and upon all around him, to bless and praise Jehovah.

## Hallelujah.

35. HALLELUJAH, or, "Praise ye Jah." The Talmud and Midrash observe that this is the first Hallelujah in the Psalter, and that the way in which it is connected with the prospect of the final overthrow of the wicked is remarkable, and full of meaning.

## PSALM CV.

THIS Psalm, like the 78th and the 106th, has for its theme the early history of Israel, and God's wonders wrought on behalf of the nation; but it differs from both those Psalms in the *intention* with which it pursues this theme. The 78th Psalm is didactic; its object is to teach a lesson: it recalls the past, as conveying instruction and warning for the present. The 106th Psalm is a Psalm of penitential confession. The history of the past appears in it only as a history of Israel's sin. In this Psalm, on the other hand, the mighty acts of Jehovah for His people from the first dawn of their national existence are recounted as a fitting subject for thankfulness, and as a ground for future obedience. Those interpositions of God are especially dwelt upon which have a reference to the fulfilment of His promise, which exhibit most clearly His faithfulness to His covenant. Hence the series begins with the covenant made with Abraham, tracing all the steps in its fulfilment to the occupation of the Promised Land. This is commenced as the theme of the Psalm in ver. 8—11.

The first fifteen verses are found in 1 Chron. xvi. 8—22 (with some slight variations), as the first portion of the festal song which, on the day when the Ark of God was brought to its resting-place on Zion, was delivered by David into the hands of Asaph and his brethren, "to give thanks unto Jehovah." The second part of that song consists of Psalm xcvi., the first verse of Psalm cvii., and the forty-seventh and forty-eighth verses of Psalm cvi. The last of these is the doxology which closes the Fourth Book, and was evidently a late addition. It seems, therefore, impossible to doubt that the song in the Chronicles is a combination from other sources.

Like the last Psalm, this closes with a Hallelujah. It is the first of a number of Psalms beginning with the word *Hodu*, "Give thanks" (cv., cvii., cxviii., cxxxvi.), which Delitzsch styles "*Hodu-Psalms*," or *Confitemini*, just as those which begin with Hallelujah may be called Hallelujah Psalms, cvi., cxi.—cxiii., cxvii., cxxxv., cxlvi.—el.

- 1 O GIVE thanks to Jehovah, call upon His Name,  
Make known among the peoples His doings ;
- 2 Sing unto Him, play unto Him,  
Meditate of all His wondrous works.
- 3 Make your boast of His holy Name,  
Let the heart of them rejoice that seek Jehovah.
- 4 Enquire ye after Jehovah and His strength,  
Seek His face evermore.
- 5 Remember His wondrous works that He hath done,  
His tokens, and the judgements of His mouth,
- 6 O ye seed of Abraham His servant,  
Ye children of Jacob, His chosen.
- 7 He, Jehovah, is our God,

1-6. The greatness of God's love, as manifested to His people in their history, calls for the fullest acknowledgement. The Psalmist would have Israel sound forth His praises among all nations. They are not to sit down in idle satisfaction with their own privileges. His "doings" (ver 1), His "wondrous works" (ver. 2, 5), His "tokens," "the judgements of His mouth" (ver. 5), "His holy Name" (ver. 3), as the revelation of His character and attributes,—all these are to form the subject of loud thanksgiving,—all these are to become, through Israel, the heritage of the world.

1. Taken word for word from Is. xii. 4.

5 TOKENS . . . JUDGEMENTS ; the miracles in Egypt are chiefly

meant, as these are chiefly dwelt upon afterwards.

6. SEED OF ABRAHAM : in 1 Chron. xvi. 13, "seed of Israel." His CHOSEN, plural, referring to the people, not to Jacob. It is on this ground, because they are Abraham's seed, because they are God's chosen, because they are Jacob's children, heritors of the covenant and the promises, that they are bound, beyond all others, to "remember" what God has done for them. On the other hand, God, who made the covenant with their fathers, "remembers" it (ver. 8), "for His part will surely keep and perform" it.

7. The Psalmist begins himself that praise of God to which he has exhorted his people. And first he extols "the covenant," "the word"

- His judgements are in all the earth.  
 8 He hath remembered His covenant for ever,  
 The word which He confirmed to a thousand  
 generations ;  
 9 (The covenant) which He made with Abraham,  
 And His oath (which He sware) unto Isaac,  
 10 And He established it unto Jacob for a statute,  
 Unto Israel for an everlasting covenant,  
 11 Saying, "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,  
 The line of your inheritance."  
 12 When they were (but) a small number,  
 Very few and sojourners therein,  
 13 And went to and fro from nation to nation,  
 From (one) kingdom to another people,  
 14 He suffered no man to oppress them,  
 And reproved kings for their sakes, (saying,)  
 15 "Touch not Mine anointed ones,

(or promise), "the oath" by which God had bound Himself to the patriarchs, and which He "remembered," *i.e.* fulfilled, when He brought them into the land of Canaan.

OUR GOD, by covenant, but also Judge and Ruler of all nations.

8. HE HATH REMEMBERED: in 1 Chron. xvi. 12, "remember ye."

TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS: from Deut. vii. 9.

9. UNTO ISAAC, in allusion to Gen. xxvi. 3, where God says to Isaac, "To thee and to thy seed will I give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;" comp. Gen. xxi. 16.

11. THE LINE, *i.e.* an inheritance measured out by line, as in lxxviii. 55; see note on xvi. 6.

12—15. The Divine protection by which the small beginnings of the nation were shielded.

12. A SMALL NUMBER, lit. "men of number," as in Gen. xxxiv. 30; see also Deut. iv. 27, xxvi. 5; Jer. xlv. 28. So Horace says, "Nos numerus sumus."

13. NATION . . . PEOPLE. "The former denotes the mass as bound together by a common origin, language, country, descent; the latter as united under one government."—*Delitzsch.*

14. KINGS, viz. of the Egyptians, Gen. xii. 17, and of the Philistines, Gen. xx., xxvi.

15. TOUCH NOT, with allusion, perhaps, to Gen. xxvi. 11.

MINE ANOINTED, *i.e.* specially set apart and consecrated. The Poet uses the language of his own time, not that of the patriarchs, who were never anointed. But inasmuch as in David's time priests and prophets were anointed (1 Kings xix. 16), when he would say that the patriarchs are

- And to My prophets do no harm."  
 16 And He called for a famine upon the land,  
 He brake every staff of bread.  
 17 He sent before them a man,  
 Joseph was sold for a slave ;  
 18 They afflicted his feet with fetters,  
 He was laid in iron (chains),

priests of the true God, and therefore to be regarded as sacred, he gives them the epithet "anointed," as in the next hemistich "prophets," a name which God bestows upon Abraham, Gen. xx. 7, when he says to Abimelech, "And now give the man back his wife, for he is a prophet; and if he pray for thee, thou shalt live."

MY PROPHETS. A good instance of the wide signification of this word. It is derived from a root signifying *to boil, to bubble up*. The prophet is one in whose soul there rises a spring, a rushing stream of Divine inspiration. In the later language he not only receives the Divine word, but he is made the *utterer of it*, the organ of its communication to others. But in the earlier instances, as in that of Abraham, his official character does not distinctly appear, though doubtless, like Noah, he was "a preacher of righteousness," and taught his own family (and through them ultimately the whole world) the way of the Lord. (See Gen. xviii. 19.) Here the prophet means little more than one to whom God speaks, one with whom He holds converse, whether by word, or vision, or dream, or inner voice. (Comp. Num. xii. 6—8.) We approach nearest to what is meant by styling the patriarchs prophets, when we read such passages as Gen. xviii. 17, "And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" or again, the pleading of Abraham for Sodom, in ver. 23—33 of the

same chapter. It is, indeed, as pleading with God *in intercession* that Abraham is termed a "prophet" in Gen. xx. 7. The title is thus very similar to that of the "Friend of God," Is. xli. 8; 2 Chron. xx. 7; James ii. 23.

16. From this point, as far as ver. 38, the history of the nation in Egypt is followed, with a recognition of the Divine Hand fashioning it at every step, and at every step accomplishing the fulfilment of the promise.

16—22. First, the preliminary steps in the history of Joseph. The famine in Canaan was no chance occurrence; God called for it. (Comp. 2 Kings viii. 1; Am. v. 8; Hag. i. 11.) Joseph's position in Egypt was no accident; God had sent him thither: so he himself traces the hand of God, Gen. xlv. 5, l. 20.

16. STAFF OF BREAD. The figure occurs first in Lev. xxvi. 26; comp. Is. iii. 1. The same figure is suggested in civ. 15, "bread that strengtheneth (stayeth) man's heart."

18. This is a much harsher picture of Joseph's imprisonment than that given in Genesis xxxix. 20—23, xl. 4. But it may refer to the earlier stages of the imprisonment, before he had won the confidence of his gaoler, or it may be tinged with the colouring of poetry.

WITH FETTERS. Heb. "with the fetter." The word occurs only here and cxlix. 8.

HIE WAS LAID IN IRON. I have

- 19 Until the time that his word came,  
 The saying of Jehovah had tried him.  
 20 The king sent and loosed him,  
 The ruler of the peoples, and let him go free.  
 21 He made him lord over his house,  
 And ruler over all his substance,  
 22 To bind his princes at his will,  
 And to teach his elders wisdom.  
 23 Israel also came into Egypt,

here followed the paraphrase of the E. V. In the margin, however, the literal rendering of the Hebrew is correctly given, "His soul came into iron." ("His soul," merely a periphrasis of the person = "he," as in lvii. 4, xciv. 17), *i.e.* he was a prisoner, bound with chains. Jerome, "in ferrum venit anima ejus." The more picturesque but incorrect rendering of the P. B. V., "the iron entered into his soul," follows the Vulg., "ferrum pertransiit animam ejus." The force of the expression has made it stereotyped in our language. It is a striking instance of the supremacy of the P. B. V. Probably not one reader in a hundred ever thinks of any other translation of the verse, or is aware that the Bible Version is different.

19 HIS WORD. This may be (1), "the word of *Joseph*," *i.e.* either (a) his interpretation of the dreams of the king's officers in the prison, which finally led to his own liberation, Gen. xli. 12; or (b) the word revealed to him in dreams of his own future exaltation, Gen. xlii. 9; or (2) "the word of *Jehovah*," *viz.* that which first foretold, and then fulfilled the promise of, his exaltation. If we adopt (1), then the meaning is, Joseph lay in prison till his interpretation of the dreams came to pass.

CAME, *i.e.* was fulfilled, a word

used in the same way of the fulfilment of prophecies, Jud. xiii. 12, 17 ("come to pass," E. V.); 1 Sam. ix. 6; Jer. xvii. 15.

THE SAYING (utterance, promise) OF JEHOVAH, different from the word in the previous verse. This seems most naturally to be understood, not of God's interpretation of the dreams, but of God's promise of future exaltation conveyed to him in his dreams. The Divine utterance has ascribed to it a living effectual power, as in exix. 50. It proved him by testing his faith during the years of suffering and imprisonment which intervened between the promise and its fulfilment.

20. With what follows, comp. Gen. xli. 14, 39, 40, 44.

22. TO BIND. The earliest instance of the use of the word in a sense approaching to that which it had later, in the phrase "binding and loosing." It denotes here generally the exercise of control. "The capability of binding is to be regarded as an evidence of authority; a power of compelling obedience, or, in default thereof, of inflicting punishment."—*Phillips*.

TO TEACH . . . WISDOM; not to be pressed of literal instruction in the art of politics, but merely expressing in poetical form what is said in Gen. xli. 38, 39.

- And Jacob was a sojourner in the land of Ham.  
 24 And He caused His people to be fruitful exceedingly,  
 And He made them stronger than their adversaries.  
 25 He turned their heart to hate His people,  
 To deal subtilly with His servants.  
 26 He sent Moses His servant,  
 Aaron whom He had chosen.  
 27 They did among them His signs  
 And tokens in the land of Ham.  
 28 He sent darkness and made it dark,—  
 And they rebelled not against His words.

23. LAND OF HAM, as in lxxviii. 51.

24. Comp. Exod. i. 7; Deut. xxvi. 5. What follows to ver. 38 is a *résumé* of the history as given in the first twelve chapters of Exodus, and especially of the plagues. The fifth and sixth plagues, however, are omitted altogether, and the plague of darkness is placed first: in other respects the order of Exodus is observed. That in lxxviii. 44, &c. is different.

25. HE TURNED. This direct ascription of the hostility on the part of the Egyptians to God as its author gave early offence. Hence the Chald. and Arab. render, "their heart was turned." Grotius and others would soften the expression as meaning only that God suffered this hostility, arising from the increase of the people. But the difficulty is exactly of the same kind as when it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, or as we find in Is. vi. 9, 10; Mark iv. 12; John xii. 39, 40; Rom. xi. 8. See notes on li. 4, ix. 3.

TO DEAL SUBTILLY; the same word as in Gen. xxxvii. 18 (where E. V. "they conspired against"). Compare Exod. i. 10, "Come and let us deal wisely with them:" the reference is to the putting to death the male children.

26. WHOM HE HAD CHOSEN, viz. as His priest.

27. AMONG THEM, the Egyptians. Comp. lxxviii. 43; Exod. x. 2, "My signs which I have done (lit. set, placed) among them."

28. The ninth plague (Exod. x. 21—29) mentioned first,—why, it is difficult to see. Hengstenberg thinks because "darkness is an image of the Divine wrath," and "the Egyptians were in this sense covered with darkness from the first to the last plague." But this is far-fetched. The variation in the order of the plagues from the narrative in Exodus may be paralleled by the variation in the order of the commandments as quoted by our Lord in Matt. xix. 18, 19; Mark x. 19; Luke xviii. 20,—passages in which the order and enumeration differ from one another as well as from the original in Exod. xx.

AND THEY REBELLED NOT, *i.e.* Moses and Aaron, who, and not the Egyptians, must here be the subject. The obedience of Moses and Aaron to the Divine command may here be made prominent, with reference to the unwillingness of Moses in the first instance, and also to the subsequent disobedience of both, Num. xx. 24, xxvii. 14.



- 29 He turned their waters into blood,  
And made their fish to die.  
30 Their land swarmed with frogs  
In the chambers of their kings.  
31 He spake the word, and there came flies,  
Gnats in all their border.  
32 He gave (them) hail as their rain,  
Flaming fire in their land.  
33 He smote also their vines and their fig-trees,  
And brake the trees of their border.  
34 He spake the word, and the locusts came,  
And grasshoppers without number,  
35 And devoured all the green herb in their land,  
And devoured the fruit of their ground.  
36 And He smote all the first-born in their land,  
The firstlings of all their strength.  
37 And He brought them forth with silver and gold,  
And there was none among their tribes that stumbled.  
38 Egypt was glad when they went forth,  
For their terror had fallen upon them.  
39 He spread a cloud for a covering,

29. The first plague, Exod. vii. 14—25; in the next verse, the second, Exod. viii. 1—14.

31. The fourth plague, that of flies, Exod. viii. 20—24, and the third, that of gnats, or mosquitoes (E. V. "lice"), Exod. viii. 16—19.

32, 33. From the third plague he passes to the seventh, Exod. ix. 13—35.

34, 35. The eighth plague, Exod. x. 1—20, where only one kind of locust is mentioned. Here we have also, "grasshopper" (a species of locust winged, Nah. iii. 17, and hairy, Jer. li. 27), as in lxxviii. 46, "caterpillar" in the parallelism.

36. The fifth and sixth plagues are omitted, and the series closed with the last, in language borrowed from lxxviii. 51.

37. WITH SILVER AND GOLD: Exod. xii. 35.

THAT STUMBLER. See the same phrase, as descriptive of vigour, Is. v. 27, "none shall be weary or stumble among them;" and for the general sense comp. Exod. xiii. 18.

38. WAS GLAD: Exod. xii. 31—33. THEIR TERROR: xv. 14—16; Deut. xi. 25.

39—41. Three of the principal miracles in the wilderness, which sum up the period between the departure from Egypt and the entrance into the Promised Land. But it is remarkable that the great miracle of the passage of the Red Sea, a favourite theme with poets and prophets, is not even alluded to.

39. SPREAD A CLOUD: not, as in Ex. xiv. 19, as a protection against

- And fire to lighten the night.  
 40 They asked and He brought quails,  
 And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.  
 41 He opened the rock and the waters flowed,  
 They went along the deserts (as) a river.  
 42 For He remembered His holy word,  
 (He remembered) Abraham His servant,  
 43 And He brought forth His people with gladness,  
 His chosen with a song of joy,  
 44 And He gave them the lands of the nations,  
 And they took possession of the labour of the peoples ;  
 45 That they might keep His statutes,  
 And observe His laws.

Hallelujah.

their enemies, but rather over their heads, as a protection against the burning sun.

40. See on lxxviii. 24, 27.

THEY ASKED. The verb is in the sing., referring to the people.

41. ROCK. The word is *tsur*, and therefore the miracle at Horeb is intended ; see on lxxviii. 15.

42—45. Conclusion, giving, first the reasons why God had thus dealt with Israel, viz. His own promise, and the faith of His servant Abraham, as in ver. 8, 9 ; next, the result in their history, that by virtue of this covenant they had taken possession of the land of Canaan ; lastly, the great purpose designed by all that marvellous guidance, "That they

might keep His statutes, and observe His laws."

43. WITH GLADNESS, alluding, probably, to the song of triumph after the overthrow of Pharaoh and his captains in the Red Sea. Comp. Is. xxxv. 10 : "And the redeemed of Jehovah shall return and come to Zion with a song of joy, and everlasting gladness shall be on their head," &c.

44. LABOURS ; not only cultivated lands, but cities, treasures, &c.

45. THAT THEY MIGHT KEEP. This was God's purpose, that Israel should be a holy nation in the midst of other nations, a priesthood representing the world, and claiming it for God as His world.

## PSALM CVI.

THIS is the first of a series of Hallelujah Psalms : Psalms of which the word Hallelujah is, as it were, the Inscription (cvi., cxi.—cxiii., cxvii., cxxxv., cxlvi.—cl.). As in the last Psalm, so here, the history of Israel is recapitulated. In that it was turned into a thanksgiving ; in this it forms the burden of a confession. There, God's mighty acts for His people were celebrated with joy ; here, His people's sin is humbly and sorrowfully acknowledged. Nothing is more remarkable in these great historical Psalms than the utter absence of any word or sentiment tending to feed the national vanity. All the glory of Israel's history is confessed to be due, not to her heroes, her priests, her prophets, but to God ; all the failures which are written upon that history, all discomfitures, losses, reverses, the sword, famine, exile, are recognized as the righteous chastisement which the sin of the nation has provoked. This is the strain of such Psalms as the 78th, the 105th, the 106th. This is invariably the tone assumed by all the divinely-instructed teachers of the people, by the prophets in their great sermons, by the poets in their contributions to the national liturgy. There is no other poetry in the world of a popular and national kind so full of patriotic sentiment, and yet at the same time marked by so complete an abstinence from all those themes which are commonly found in poetry written for the people. There is not a single ode in honour of Moses or Aaron, or Joshua or David ; there is not one which sings the glory of the nation, except as that glory is given it of God. The history of the nation, whenever referred to, is referred to almost invariably for the purpose of rebuke and upbraiding, certainly not for the purpose of commendation or self-applause.

From ver. 47 it may be fairly inferred that the Psalm is of the date of the exile, or was written shortly after the return of the first company of exiles. It is, however, remarkable that both that verse and the closing doxology, together perhaps with the first verse of this

Psalm, form the concluding portion of the Psalm which, according to the author of the Book of Chronicles, was sung by David when he removed the Ark to Mount Zion, 1 Chron. xvi. 34—36. On this point, see more in the Introduction to Ps. cv., and the note on ver. 48.

The Psalm has no strophical division. It consists of an Introduction, ver. 1—6. It then follows the history of Israel as a history of perpetual transgressions, first, from Egypt through the wilderness, ver. 7—33, and then in the Holy Land, 34—46, and concludes with a prayer for deliverance from the present calamity, viz. the captivity in Babylon, ver. 47.

# 1 HALLELUJAH!

Give thanks to Jehovah, for He is good,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.

2 Who can utter the mighty acts of Jehovah,  
(Who) can tell forth all His praise?

3 Blessed are they that keep judgement,  
He that doeth righteousness at all times.

4 Remember me, O Jehovah, with the favour thou bearest  
unto Thy people,

O visit me with Thy salvation;

5 That I may see the prosperity of Thy chosen,

1—5. The first five verses seem to stand alone, and to have little or no direct connection with the rest of the Psalm. Hupfeld regards the first three verses, in particular, as nothing but a general introduction, and one quite at variance with the strain of the Psalm as a confession of sin. But this is a hasty and superficial view. The first verse, no doubt, is of the nature of a doxological formula, such as we find in some other of these later Psalms. But the second and third verses have an immediate bearing on what follows. What so fitting to introduce the confession of a nation's sin and ingratitude as the rehearsal of God's goodness manifested to it, and the acknowledgement of

the blessedness of those who, instead of despising the goodness, as Israel had done, walked in the ways of the Lord, keeping judgement and doing righteousness (ver. 3)? Or again, what more natural than that the sense of the national privilege, the claim of a personal share in that privilege, should spring in the heart and rise to the lips of one who felt most deeply the national sin and ingratitude?

GOOD, *i.e.* not so much in reference to His own nature as in His gracious dealing with men.

2. THE MIGHTY ACTS are all that He has done for His people, as His PRAISE is all the glory which He has thus manifested, and which calls for praise from them.

That I may be glad with the gladness of Thy nation,  
That I may make my boast with thine inheritance.

- 6 We have sinned with our fathers,  
We have done iniquity, we have dealt wickedly.
- 7 Our fathers in Egypt considered not Thy wonders,  
They remembered not the multitude of Thy loving-kindnesses,  
But rebelled at the sea, at the Red Sea ;
- 8 And (yet) He saved them for His Name's sake,  
To make His might to be known.
- 9 And He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up,  
And He made them go through the depths as (through) the wilderness.
- 10 And He saved them from the hand of the hater,  
And ransomed them from the hand of the enemy.
- 11 And the waters covered their adversaries,  
Not one of them was left.
- 12 And they believed His words,

6. The language is borrowed evidently from that of Solomon's prayer, 1 Kings viii. 47. Comp. Dan. ix. 5 ; Bar. ii. 12, where in the same way several words are used in confession, as if to express both the *earnestness* of deep conviction, and also the sense of *manifest* transgressions.

WITH OUR FATHERS. The nation is thus regarded as a whole, one in guilt and one in punishment. See note on lxxix. 8. Not only the "fathers in Egypt" (ver. 7) are meant, because the generation in Canaan are also mentioned (ver. 34—36).

7. OUR FATHERS IN EGYPT. These words are connected together by the accents, but the words "in Egypt" belong to the whole sentence. The "wonders" are wonders wrought in Egypt, the impression of which, great as they were, had so quickly

faded, that they were forgotten even when the people stood on the shore of the Red Sea. Again, in ver. 13, 21, this *forgetfulness* is censured. Comp. lxxviii. 11 ; Deut. xxxii. 18 ; and see note on Ps. ciii. 2.

REBELLED ; with reference to the occurrence in Ex. xiv. 10—13.

This is the first act of transgression of which confession is made.

8. HIS MIGHT TO BE KNOWN, as in lxxvii. 14.

9. Compare, for the form of expression, Nah. i. 4 ; Is. i. 2, li. 10, lxiii. 13.

11. NOT ONE OF THEM WAS LEFT. Comp. Ex. xiv. 28.

12. THEY BELIEVED . . . THEY SANG, with evident reference to Ex. xiv. 31, xv. 1 : "And Israel saw the great act (lit. hand) which Jehovah had done against Egypt, and the people feared Jehovah, and they

They sang His praise.

- 13 Very soon they forgot His doings,  
They waited not for His counsel ;
- 14 And lusted for themselves a lust in the wilderness,  
And tempted God in the waste.
- 15 And He gave them their request,  
And sent leanness (withal) into their soul.
- 16 And they were jealous against Moses in the camp,  
Against Aaron, the holy one of Jehovah.
- 17 (Then) the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,  
And covered the congregation of Abiram ;

*believed* on Jehovah and His servant Moses. Then *sang* Moses and the children of Israel this song." Both the faith and the song are mentioned, not in praise of their conduct, but only as still further proof that, whatever impressions were produced, whether by God's judgements or His mercies, were but temporary and on the surface. The goodness of Israel was like the dew, early gone.

13—33. The confession of Israel's sins in the wilderness. On the first of these, the lusting for food, comp. lxxviii. 18, 29, and Ex. xv. 22—24, xvii. 2. See also Ex. xvi. and Num. xi.

13. WAITED NOT ; were not content to exercise a patient dependence upon God, leaving to Him to fulfil His own purposes in His own way, but would rather rule Him than submit themselves to His rule.

14. LUSTED FOR THEMSELVES A LUST ; the expression is taken from Num. xi. 4.

15. HE GAVE THEM THEIR REQUEST. See on lxxviii. 21, 29.

LEANNESS. Comp. Is. x. 16, xvii. 4. This LEANNESS and sickness may refer to the loathing of the food, followed by great mortality (the "blow of God"), Num. xi. 20, 33, the SOUL being here used only in a physical

sense of the life. But the figurative sense is equally true and equally pertinent. The very heart and spirit of a man, when bent only or supremely on the satisfaction of its earthly desires and appetites, is always dried up and withered. It becomes a lean, shrunk, miserable thing, always craving more food, yet drawing thence no nourishment, "*magnas inter opes inops.*"

16—18. The second great sin in the wilderness was the insurrection against their divinely-appointed leaders. The reference is to Num. xvi., xvii.

16. THE HOLY ONE. Aaron is so called on account of his priestly office. It was this, as an exclusive privilege, which was assailed by Korah and his company, on the ground that all the congregation were "holy," *i.e.* set apart and consecrated to God as His priests.

17. OPENED. In Num. xvi. 30, 32, xxvi. 10, the fuller expression occurs, "opened her mouth." COVERED, as in Num. xvi. 33.

Dathan and Abiram only are mentioned, and this is in strict agreement with Num. xxvi. 11, where it is said, "Notwithstanding *the children of Korah* died not." And the same thing is at least *implied* in Num. xvi.

- 18 And a fire was kindled in their congregation,  
A flame burned up the wicked.
- 19 They made a calf in Horeb,  
And bowed themselves before the molten image,  
20 And they bartered their glory,  
For the likeness of an ox that eateth grass.
- 21 They forgot God their Saviour,  
Who had done great things in Egypt;  
22 Wondrous things in the land of Ham,  
Fearful things by the Red Sea.
- 23 Then He said He would destroy them,  
Had not Moses His chosen stood in the breach  
before Him,

27, where it is said that, just before the catastrophe took place, "Dathan and Abiram" (there is no mention of Korah) "came out and stood in the door of their tents." See this noticed and accounted for in Blunt's *Veracity of the Books of Moses*, Part I. § 20, p. 86.

18. The other punishment, the destruction by fire, befell the 250 princes of the congregation who offered incense before the Lord, Num. xvi. 2, 35.

THE WICKED, as in Num. xvi. 26, "Get ye up from the tents of these wicked men."

19. The third instance of transgression, the worship of the calf: see Ex. xxxii. There is probably also a reference to Deut. ix. 8—12, where Moses reminds the people of their sin, especially as *Horeb* (which is the common name in Deuteronomy), and not Sinai, is here the name of the mountain.

20. THEIR GLORY, *i.e.* their God, who had manifested Himself to them in His glory; glory, like light, being used in Scripture to denote the Divine perfections. Others understand

by the expression the God who was the source and fountain of their glory, or that revelation of God to them which distinguished them from all other nations. Comp. Deut. iv. 7. "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" But the closest parallel is Jer. ii. 11, "Hath a nation bartered their gods, which are yet no gods? But My people have *bartered their glory* for that which doth not profit."

LIKENESS, properly "model" or "figure." See the same word in Deut. v. 6—8.

21. FORGAT GOD; with reference, perhaps, to the warning, Deut. vi. 12, "Beware lest thou forget Jehovah."

22. LAND OF HAM, as in cv. 23, 27. Comp. lxxviii. 51, "tents of Ham," peculiar to these historical Psalms.

23. THEN HE SAID, lit. "And He said (resolved, uttered His word), to destroy them," Deut. ix. 13. Comp. Ex. xxxii. 10.

IN THE BREACH. The intercession of Moses is compared to the act of a

To turn away His fury from destroying (them).

- 24 And they rejected the desirable land,  
 They believed not His word;  
 25 And they murmured in their tents,  
 They hearkened not to the voice of Jehovah.  
 26 Then He lifted up His hand against them,  
 To make them fall in the wilderness,  
 27 And to make their seed fall among the nations,  
 And to scatter them in the lands.  
 28 They were yoked also unto Baal-peor,  
 And ate the sacrifices of the dead,

brave leader, covering with his body the breach made in the walls of his fortress. Comp. Ezek. xxii. 30, "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap (*breach*, as here) before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it."

24-27. A fourth act of sin,—the rebellion which followed on the report of the spies, Num. xiii. xiv.

24. THE DESIRABLE LAND, so called also in Jer. iii. 19; Zech. vii. 14 (in E. V. "pleasant land"). The other expressions in this and the next verse are from the Pentateuch: "they rejected" (E. V. "despised"), Num. xiv. 31; "murmured in their tents," Deut. i. 27; "lifted up His hands," as in Ex. vi. 6, Deut. xxxii. 40: "to make them fall," as in Num. xiv. 29, 32. The phrase, "to lift up the hand," refers to the custom in the taking of an oath. Comp. Gen. xiv. 22. The threat of exile (ver. 27.), of which nothing is said in Num. xiv., is taken, doubtless, from Lev. xxvi.; Deut. xxviii. Compare the same expression Ezek. xx. 23, "I lifted up Mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them

among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries."

28. THEY WERE YOKED: a fifth transgression in the wilderness, recorded in Num. xxv. The same verb is used there, ver. 3, with reference to the prostitution which accompanied the worship of Baal-peor, "the Moabite Priapus." Comp. I Cor. vi. 16, 17, and with the next clause, ATE THE SACRIFICES, I Cor. x. 18-21, with Num. xxv. 2.

THE DEAD. Two interpretations have been given: (1) that idols are meant, as opposed to "the living God." Comp. Jer. x. 10, 11, and the contemptuous expression, "carcasses of their kings" (probably said of idols, as rivals of the One true King of Israel), in Ezek. xliii. 7, 9. Comp. Lev. xxvi. 30; Jer. xvi. 18. (2) Usage, however, is rather in favour of some allusion to necromantic rites, as in Deut. xviii. 11, "one who seeketh to the dead;" Is. viii. 19, "should a people seek to the dead (by the aid of necromancers, consulting them as Saul consulted the Witch of Endor), on behalf of the living?"

This 28th verse, as Delitzsch remarks, is of historical importance, as



- 29 And gave provocation with their doings,  
And a plague brake in upon them.
- 30 Then Phinehas stood (up) and did judgement,  
And (so) the plague was stayed ;
- 31 And it was counted unto him for righteousness,  
Unto all generations for evermore.
- 32 They angered (God) also at the waters of Meribah,  
And it went ill with Moses for their sakes.

having given rise to the prohibition of flesh offered in sacrifice to idols. St. Paul teaches that the pollution, when it exists, is not in the meat which has been offered in sacrifice, but in the conscience of the eater, 1 Cor. x. 28, 29.

29. A PLAGUE. The word is used of a Divine judgement, more commonly of sickness, but here, as in Numb. xxv. 8, 9, 18, of the slaughter accomplished by human instruments. Comp. Ex. xxxii. 35.

30. STOOD. See the similar expression, Numb. xxv. 7, "And when Phinehas saw it, he *rose up*;" and the same verb as here, Num. xvi. 48, of Aaron's intercession. It is a picture of the one zealous man rising up from the midst of the inactive multitude, who sit still and make no effort.

DID JUDGEMENT, not, as in P.B.V. following the Chald. and Syr., "prayed" (*i.e.* interceded). The two figures, Aaron standing with the incense, and with the true priestly heart, between the dead and the living, and making atonement, and Phinehas as the minister of righteous vengeance turning away wrath, form a striking and instructive contrast. The one makes atonement in saving life, the other in destroying it.

31. IT WAS COUNTED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS; it was looked

upon as a righteous act, and rewarded accordingly. The same thing is said of the *faith* of Abraham, Gen. xv. 6: a striking instance of the fearlessness of expression which is to be found in the Scriptures, as compared with the dogmatic forms of modern controversial theology. This verse has given occasion to whole disquisitions on the subject of justification, with which it really has nothing to do, though at least the language is in perfect accordance with that of St. James (ii. 20—26).

The reward of this righteousness was the perpetual continuance of the priesthood in his family (Numb. xxv. 12, 13).

UNTO ALL GENERATIONS, &c., lit. "for generation and generation, to (all) eternity," a remarkable instance of the hyperbolic way in which this and similar phrases are employed, and one which is a warning against hastily building doctrines upon mere words.

32. The sixth instance of transgression—the rebellion against Moses and Aaron at Meribah, in the fortieth year of the wandering, Num. xx. 2—13.

IT WENT ILL WITH. This must be the meaning here (though elsewhere, the same phrase means "it grieved, or displeased," as in Neh. ii.

- 33 For they rebelled against His Spirit,  
And he spake unadvisedly with his lips.
- 34 They did not destroy the peoples,  
As Jehovah had commanded them ;
- 35 But they mixed themselves with the nations,  
And learnt their works ;
- 36 And served their idols,  
And they became to them a snare ;
- 37 And they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to  
false gods ;
- 38 And shed innocent blood,  
The blood of their sons and their daughters,  
Which they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,  
And the land was polluted with bloodshed.

10, xiii. 8 ; Jon. iv. 1). Comp. Deut. i. 37, iii. 26, "also Jehovah was angry with me *for your sakes*." The reason why Moses was forbidden to enter the Promised Land is here stated more distinctly than in the narrative. It was the exasperation into which he suffered himself to be betrayed in uttering the words in Numb. xx. 10 ; though the impatient spirit was shown also in striking the rock twice.

33. THEY REBELLED AGAINST HIS SPIRIT. Three explanations of this line have been given. (1) By "his spirit" has been understood the spirit of Moses, and accordingly the line has been rendered in the E.V. "they *provoked* his spirit." This, however is to give a meaning to the verb which it never has. (2) The words have been understood of disobedience against God : "they rebelled against His (God's) Spirit." Comp. Is. lxiii. 10, "But they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit," with Ps. lxxviii. 40. But (3), retaining this last explanation, it is still a question what is

the subject of the verb. It *may* be said of Moses and Aaron, that *they* rebelled (see Num. xx. 24, xxvii. 14), but it is better to assume that the people are the subject, the two clauses of ver. 33 thus answering to the two of ver. 32.

34. Disobedience in the land of Canaan itself, especially in not rooting out the nations (as enjoined Ex. xxiii. 32, 33, and often repeated, Josh. xxiii. 12, 13), and the adoption of their idolatrous worship.

36. A SNARE, as the warning ran, Ex. xxiii. 33, xxxiv. 12 ; Deut. vii. 16. Of the abominations of the heathen, that of human sacrifices, as in the worship of Moloch, is especially dwelt upon. This was an offering to FALSE GODS, lit. "lords," like *Baalim* 'Adonim, and then applied to gods.

38. POLLUTED. The strongest word taken from Num. xxxv. 33 ; comp. Is. xxiv. 5. The land, the very soil itself, was polluted and accursed, as well as the inhabitants (ver. 39).

- 39 And they were defiled with their works,  
And went a-whoring with their doings.
- 40 Then the anger of Jehovah was kindled against His  
people,  
And He abhorred His own inheritance.
- 41 And He gave them into the hand of the nations,  
And their haters ruled over them.
- 42 And their enemies oppressed them,  
And they were bowed down under their hand.
- 43 Many a time did He deliver them,  
But they rebelled (against Him) in their counsel,  
And were brought low through their iniquity.
- 44 But He looked upon their distress,  
When He heard their cry.
- 45 And He remembered for them His covenant,  
And pitied them according to the greatness of His  
loving-kindness.
- 46 And He made them to find compassion  
In the presence of all who carried them captive.
- 47 Save us, O Jehovah our God,  
And gather us from the nations,

40—43. The terrible and repeated judgements of God.

42. THEY WERE BOWED DOWN, elsewhere said of the enemies of Israel, Jud. iii. 30, iv. 23, viii. 28, xi. 33.

43. IN THEIR COUNSEL, as in lxxxi. 12; Jer. vii. 24, emphatically opposed to the counsel and purpose of God.

44. The Psalmist turns now to the other side of God's dealings with His people. It was not all anger. If they forgot His covenant, He remembered it. Even in the land of their captivity, He softened the hearts of their captors.

THEIR CRY. The word which is often used of the song of joy, here,

as in 1 Kings viii. 28, of the cry of distress.

45. PITIED THEM, or "repented," as in xc. 13.

46. There is a reference to Solomon's prayer, 1 Kings viii. 50. Comp. Neh i. 11; Dan. i. 9.

47. The grace of God, already shown to His people, leads to the prayer of this verse—a supplication for which the whole Psalm has prepared the way. The language would seem to indicate that the Psalm was written in exile, though the same prayer might also have been uttered by one of those who returned in the first caravan, on behalf of his brethren who were still dispersed.

That we may give thanks unto Thy holy Name,  
That we may glory in Thy praise.

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48 Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel,  
From everlasting to everlasting.  
And let all the people say, Amen !  
Hallelujah !

GLORY IN THY PRAISE, or "deem ourselves happy in that we can praise Thee."

48. The last verse is merely a Doxology added at a time subsequent to the composition of the Psalm, to mark the close of the Book. The first line varies but slightly from that at the end of lxxii., "Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel."

The Chronicler who quotes this verse (see Introduction to this Psalm

and cv.), changes the wish, "Let all the people say, Amen," into the historic sense, "And all the people said, Amen, and praised Jehovah" (1 Chron. xvi. 36). The fact that he has incorporated this verse as well as the preceding in his Psalm, is a proof that already in his time the Psalter was divided, as at present, into Books, the Doxology being regarded as an integral portion of the Psalm.

# THE PSALMS.



BOOK V,

PSALMS CVII.—CL.



## PSALM CVII.

THERE is no obvious reason why, in the division of the Psalter into Five Books, the doxology marking the close of the Fourth Book should have been placed at the end of the 106th Psalm. On the contrary, the 106th and 107th Psalms seem to have certain links of connexion, and many critics have supposed that they are the work of the same author.

Not only are the opening words of the two Psalms identical, but what is the subject of prayer in the one is the subject of thanksgiving in the other. In cvi. 47 the Psalmist prays that God would gather Israel from the heathen : in cvii. 3 he exhorts Israel to give thanks to Him who has brought them back from their captivity.

It has been asserted by some expositors that there is an historical connexion between Psalms civ.—cvii., and it is assumed that the 107th Psalm is designed chiefly to celebrate the return from the Babylonish Captivity. But such an interpretation, however, can scarcely be maintained.

It is evident that the Psalm is not historical. It describes various incidents of human life, it tells of the perils which befall men, and the goodness of God in delivering them, and calls upon all who have experienced His care and protection gratefully to acknowledge them ; and it is perfectly general in its character. The four or five groups, or pictures, are so many samples taken from the broad and varied record of human experience.

Such a Psalm would have been admirably adapted to be sung in the Temple-worship, at the offering of the thank-offerings.

But, whatever may have been the circumstances under which the Psalm was written, or the particular occasion for which it was intended, there can be no doubt as to the great lesson which it inculcates. It teaches us not only that God's Providence watches over men, but that His ear is open to their prayers. It teaches us that prayer may be put up for temporal deliverance, and that such prayer is answered.

It teaches us that it is right to acknowledge with thanksgiving such answers to our petitions. This was the simple faith of the Hebrew Poet.

It is needless to say how readily such a faith is shaken now. First, there is the old and obvious objection that *all* such prayers, even when offered by men of devout mind, are *not* answered. Calvin notices the difficulty, quoting the story of the wit, who, when he entered the temple, and observed the votive tablets suspended there by merchants, recording their escape from shipwreck by the favour of the gods, sarcastically remarked, "I see no record of those who perish in the sea, and yet the number of them must be immense." Calvin replies, as might be expected, that though a hundredfold more are lost than escape, still God's goodness is not obscured; that He exercises judgement as well as mercy; that all deserve destruction, and that therefore His sovereign mercy ought to be acknowledged in every instance where it is displayed. It would have been better, surely, to have replied, that answers to prayer are not all of one kind; and that God as really answers His children's supplication when He gives them strength and resignation in prison or in sickness, as when He "breaks in pieces the bars of iron," or "sends His word and heals them;" when He suffers them to sink beneath the raging waters, with heaven open to their eyes, as when He "brings them to their desired haven." Closely akin to this there arises another question. Does God ever answer prayer by *direct* action upon the material world? Are not the laws of the universe the expression of His will? Are they not, therefore, unchangeable? And is it not both presumptuous and selfish to ask Him to change the phenomena, which are the result of those laws: presumptuous, because we thus dictate to Him what is best for us; selfish, because the blessing we crave may be at the expense of injury and loss to others? I conceive it may be replied, that it is not for the most part by immediate action in the material world that God grants our petitions. Even if we were forced to concede that now, since the age of miracles is past, God *never* so acts, still this should not trouble us, seeing how wide the region is in which *indirectly* our prayers even for temporal blessings may be answered. "Thus, for instance" (I venture to repeat what I have said elsewhere\*), "we pray that the cholera or the murrain may be stayed. God does not with His own hand take away the plague;

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\* *The Feast of Harvest.* A Sermon preached in St. Peter's Church, Carmarthen, p. 19.



but He puts it into the heart of some physician to find the remedy which will remove it. He does not hush the storm in a moment ; but He gives the mariner courage and skill to steer before it till he reach the haven. He does not shower bread from heaven in a famine ; but He teaches the statesman how, with wise forethought and patient endeavours, at least to mitigate the calamity. How often we speak of happy inspirations, little knowing what we mean when we speak thus ! And how unable we are to trace the chain ! We cannot see God's Spirit prompting the prayer, or suggesting the remedy which shall be the answer to the prayer. But the antecedent and the consequent are as really there, the links of the chain are as essential as they are in any of the phenomena of the material world, which present themselves to our bodily senses. And thus the answer comes not by direct interference with the laws of nature, but in accordance with the laws of the spiritual world, by the Divine action on the heart of man." If so, then the answer may be acknowledged with devout thanksgiving, and men may praise the Lord for His goodness.

- 1 "O GIVE thanks unto Jehovah, for He is good,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever."
- 2 Let the ransomed of Jehovah say (so),  
Whom He hath ransomed from the hand of the adver-  
sary,
- 3 And gathered them out of the lands.

1. The Psalm opens with the same doxological formula as cvi., only here it is put into the mouth of the exiles returned from Babylon. For a similar opening see cxviii. 1-4. In earlier Psalms where phrases of the kind occur, they do not stand at the beginning of the Psalm, and the verb "say" precedes the doxology, instead of following it ; see xxxv. 27, xl. 16.

It is the old liturgical doxology which, as in Jer. xxxiii. 11, is to be heard in the mouth of the captives restored to their own land.

2. RANSOMED OF JEHOVAH ; as

in Is. lxii. 12 (whence it may be borrowed), lxiii. 4 ; comp. xxxv. 9, 10.

THE ADVERSARY, the oppressor in Babylon ; or the word may mean, as in ver. 6, "distress." "From the hand of distress" might be said in Hebrew, in the same way as "from the hand of the dog" (xxii. 20).

3. GATHERED THEM, as in cvi. 47, and generally in the Prophets (comp. Is. xl. 12, lvi. 8, and often) of the return from the Captivity. For the same picture see Is. xliii. 5, 6, xlix. 12. The exiles, free to return, are seen flocking, not from Babylon only, but

From the East and from the West,  
From the North and from the South.

- 4 They wandered in the wilderness, in a pathless waste,  
A city where men dwell they found not ;  
5 Hungry and thirsty,  
Their soul fainted in them :  
6 Then they cried unto Jehovah in their trouble,  
And He delivered them out of their distresses ;  
7 And He led them by a straight way,

from all lands, "like doves to their windows."

3. THE SOUTH, lit. "the sea" (if the text is correct), which everywhere else means the West (the Mediterranean Sea), but must obviously here denote the South.

4. The first example : the caravan which has lost its way in the desert. The interpretation of the verse will vary according to the view we take of its connection with the preceding.

(i.) We may take the "ransomed of Jehovah" (ver. 2) as the subject of the verb; and then (*a*), by those who adopt the historical interpretation of the Psalm, the picture which follows has been held to be a description either (1) of what befell the Jews who (Jer. xliii.) fled into the wilderness to escape the Chaldeans, after the taking of Jerusalem; or (2) of the perils encountered by the caravans of exiles as they crossed long tracts of sandy desert on their return; or (3) intended to set forth in a figure the miseries of the Exile itself. Or (*b*) "the ransomed of Jehovah" may be taken in a wider sense, as denoting, not the captives at Babylon, but all Jews exposed to the risks and hardships of foreign travel.

(ii.) The subject of the verb may be changed, and this, either because (*a*) the Psalmist having begun to

speak of God's goodness to the exiles, restored by His hand to the land of their fathers, goes on to speak of other instances in which His goodness has been manifested. Or (*β*), because the first three verses were a liturgical addition, framed with particular reference to the return from Babylon, and prefixed to a poem originally designed to have a wider scope.

THEY WANDERED. The subject of the verb (see last note) may be "men" generally. The incident described was doubtless not uncommon. The usual track of the caravan is lost—obliterated, perhaps, by the sandstorm.

A CITY WHERE MEN DWELL, lit. "a city of habitation" (as E.V.). No particular city is meant, as P.B.V., "the city where they dwelt," much less is Jerusalem intended, but any inhabited city, as opposed to the uninhabited wilderness.

5. FAINTED, lit. "covered itself," as with darkness, sorrow, and the like, as in lxxvii. 3, cxlii. 3, cxliii. 4; Job. ii. 7.

6. THEN THEY CRIED. So it ever is; the pressure of a great need only forces men to seek God. Prayer is not only the resource of good men, but of all men in trouble. It is a natural instinct even of wicked men to turn to God at such times.

- That they might go to a city where men dwell ;—  
 8 Let them give thanks to Jehovah for His loving-kindness,  
 And for His wonders to the children of men :  
 9 For He satisfieth the longing soul,  
 And filleth the hungry soul with good.  
 10 Such as sat in darkness and the shadow of death,  
 Being bound in affliction and iron,  
 11 Because they rebelled against the words of God,  
 And despised the counsel of the Most High,  
 12 And He brought down their heart with labour,  
 They stumbled, and there was none to help ;—  
 13 Then they cried unto Jehovah in their trouble,  
 He saved them out of their distresses ;  
 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,  
 And brake their bonds asunder :  
 15 Let them give thanks to Jehovah for His loving-kindness,  
 And for His wonders to the children of men :  
 16 For He brake the doors of brass,  
 And cut the bars of iron in sunder.  
 17 Foolish men, because of the way of their transgression,

8. Others render, "Let them praise His loving-kindness before Jehovah, and His wonders before the children of men," *i.e.* let them confess His goodness before God and man.

9. There is a reference to ver. 5 ; "longing" answers to "thirsty," as in Is. xxix. 8.

10—16. The second example—that of prisoners.

10. DARKNESS, &c. The same expression occurs Is. xlii. 7, xlix. 9 ; Micah vii. 8, of the gloom of the prison-house. Comp. Virgil, *Æn.* vi. 734, "Neque auras Respiciunt, clausæ tenebris et carcere cæco."

AFFLICTION AND IRON. Comp.

the fuller phrase Job. xxxvi. 8 "bound in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction."

11. WORDS . . . COUNSEL. The commandments of God as given in the Law, and His counsel as declared by His prophets, are chiefly meant ; for throughout the passage language is employed which implies theocratic position of Israel. But the reference may be wider. The law written in the conscience, the instruction given by inner revelation (comp. xvi. 7), need not be excluded.

16. The expressions are apparently taken from Is. xlv. 2.

17—22. Third example : sick per-

And because of their iniquities, bring affliction upon themselves.

- 18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of food,  
 And they draw near to the gates of death.  
 19 Then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble,  
 He saveth them out of their distresses :  
 20 He sendeth His word, and healeth them,  
 And rescueth them from their graves.  
 21 Let them give thanks to Jehovah for His loving-kindness,  
 And for His wonders to the children of men.  
 22 And let them sacrifice sacrifices of thanksgiving,

sons brought by their sickness to the edge of the grave.

17. **FOOLISH MEN**, so called because of the moral infatuation which marks their conduct, as in xiv. 1, where see notes; men of earthly, sensual, selfish minds, who turn a deaf ear to warning, and despise counsel (comp. Prov. i. 7, xii. 15, xiv. 3, 9, xv. 5, xxvii. 22), and who can only be brought to reason by chastisement. The expression seems quite to exclude the notion that the allusion is to "a party of sick exiles, enfeebled probably by labours, or by uncongenial climates, so that their soul abhorred all manner of meat, and they were hard at death's door."—*Liddon*. Such persons would not be described as "foolish," but rather as objects of pity.

**THE WAY OF THEIR TRANSGRESSION.** The expression is used to denote the course of conduct, the habit of the life, and is not merely pleonastic.

**BRING AFFLICTION UPON THEMSELVES.** The proper reflexive signification of the conjugation is by all means to be retained. It most expressively marks how entirely a man brings upon himself his own punishment. I have here, and in what

follows, after the example of our translators, preferred the present tense to the past. This change of tense exists in the Hebrew, and the rendering gives more force and animation to the picture; though it would certainly be possible to continue the use of the past tense throughout.

18. Comp. the similar passage, Job xxxiii. 20—22.

20. **HE SENDETH HIS WORD.** The same expression occurs in cxlvii. 15, 18; comp. Is. lv. 11. We detect in such passages the first glimmering of St. John's doctrine of the agency of the personal Word. The Word by which the heavens were made (xxxiii. 6) is seen to be not merely the expression of God's will, but His messenger mediating between Himself and His creatures. It is interesting to compare with this the language of Elihu in the parallel passage of Job xxxiii. 23, where what is here ascribed to the agency of the Word is ascribed to that of the "mediating angel, or messenger."

**GRAVES.** The word may be taken in this sense, in allusion to their nearness to death, ver. 18, or it may mean "pits" metaphorically, the pit of suffering into which they have sunk.

And tell of His works with a song of joy.

- 23 They that go down to the sea in ships,  
That do business in great waters,  
24 These (men) have seen the works of Jehovah,  
And His wonders in the deep.  
25 For He commandeth and raiseth a stormy wind,  
Which lifteth up the waves thereof.  
26 They mount up to heaven,  
They go down (again) to the depths,  
Their soul melteth because of trouble.

23—31. Fourth example: seafarers tossed and driven by the tempest, and brought at last safe into port. The description may be compared with the language of Jonah i., ii. It is the most highly finished, the most thoroughly poetical of each of the four pictures of human peril and deliverance. It is painted as a landsman would paint it, but yet only as one who had himself been exposed to the danger could paint the storm—the waves running mountains high, on which the tiny craft seemed a plaything, the helplessness of human skill, the gladness of the calm, the safe refuge in the haven.

Addison remarks that he prefers this description of a ship in a storm before any others he had ever met with, and for the same reason for which "Longinus recommends one in Homer, because the poet has not amused himself with little fancies upon the occasion, as authors of an inferior genius, whom he mentions, had done, but because he has gathered together those circumstances which are the most apt to terrify the imagination, and which really happened in the raging of a tempest." By the way, he adds, "how much more comfortable as well as rational is this system of the Psalmist, than the pagan

scheme in Virgil and other poets, where one deity is represented as raising a storm, and another as laying it! Were we only to consider the sublime in this piece of poetry, what can be nobler than the idea it gives us of the Supreme Being thus raising a tumult among the elements, and recovering them out of their confusion; thus troubling and becalming nature?" *Spectator*, No. 489.

23. GO DOWN TO THE SEA, as in Is. xlii. 10; Jon. i. 3.

BUSINESS. There is no need to restrict this to the management of craft by seamen. It includes the occupations of fishermen, traders, persons on a voyage, &c.

24. THE WORKS OF JEHOVAH, AND HIS WONDERS, *i.e.* His rule of the elements: how at His word the storm raises the billows high in heaven, how at His word it sinks down hushed and gentle as the sea in the breath of summer.

25. FOR HE COMMANDETH, *i.e.* "and He said," the phrase which occurs so often in Gen. i. to describe God's creative fiat.

26. THEY MOUNT UP, *i.e.* not "the waves," but "the seafarers." The same expression occurs, but in a different sense, in civ. 8, where see note.

- 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,  
And are at their wits' end.
- 28 Then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble,  
And He bringeth them out of their distresses.
- 29 He husheth the storm to a gentle air,  
So that the waves thereof are still.
- 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet,  
And He leadeth them to their desired haven.
- 31 Let them give thanks to Jehovah (for) His loving-kindness,  
And (for) His wonders to the children of men.
- 32 Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people,  
And praise Him in the assembly of the elders.
- 33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness,  
And water-springs into dry ground;

27. REEL TO AND FRO, or, even more exactly, "spin round and round."

ARE AT THEIR WITS' END, lit. "all their wisdom (skill, resources, &c.) swalloweth itself up," or "cometh of itself to nought."\*

29. A GENTLE AIR. This, and not absolute "stillness," "calm" seems to be the meaning of the word.

THE WAVES THEREOF, lit. "*their* waves," but the plural suffix must refer to the sea, and may perhaps have been occasioned by the plural "great waters" in ver. 23. See note on ver. 25. Others refer the plural pronoun to the seafarers: "*their* waves," i.e. those on which they are tossed, and which threaten to engulf them.

30. HAVEN. This is probably the meaning of the word, but it occurs nowhere else. The rabbinical interpreters render it "shore," "coast."

32. ASSEMBLY. See note on i. i.

33. The character of the Psalm changes at this point. We have no longer distinct pictures as before: the beautiful double refrain is dropped, the language is harsher and more abrupt. Instead of fresh examples of deliverance from peril, and thanksgiving for God's mercies, we have now instances of God's providential government of the world exhibited in two series of contrasts. The first of these is contained in ver. 33—38, and expresses a double change—the fruitful well-watered land smitten, like the rich plain of Sodom, with desola-

\* The whole description up to this point finds a striking parallel in Ovid, *Trist.* i. 2:—

Me miserum quanti montes voluntur aquarum:

Jamjam tacturos sidera summa putes,

Quantæ diducto subsidunt æquore valles:

Jamjam tacturos Tartara nigra putes.

Rector in incerto est, nec quid fugiatve petatve

Invenit; ambiguis ars stupet ipsa malis."

- 34 A fruitful land into a salt-marsh,  
 Because of the wickedness of them that dwell therein.  
 35 (Again) He turneth the wilderness into a pool of water,  
 And a dry land into water-springs.  
 36 And there He maketh the hungry to dwell,  
 And they built a city to dwell in ;  
 37 And sow fields, and plant vineyards,  
 Which may yield the fruit of (yearly) produce.  
 38 And He blesseth them so that they multiply greatly,  
 And suffereth not their cattle to be minished.  
 39 And when they are minished and brought low  
 Through (any) oppression, evil, or sorrow,  
 40 " He poureth contempt upon princes,  
 And maketh them to wander in the waste (where there  
 is no) way."

tion, and changed into a salt-marsh ; and anon, the wilderness crowned with cities, like Tadmor (of which Pliny says, *vasto ambitu arenis includit agros*), and made fertile to produce corn and wine : the second is contained in ver. 39—41, and expresses somewhat obscurely the changes in the fortunes of *men* (as the last series did those of *countries*), viz. how the poor and the humble are raised and the rich and the proud overthrown.

35. HE TURNETH, &c. The language is borrowed from Is. xli. 18, 19, and hence it has been supposed that the allusion here is to historical events ; that ver. 33 depicts the desolation of the land whilst the Jews were captives in Babylon, ver. 35 the change which took place on their return. But the passages in Isaiah (comp., besides that already quoted, xxxv. 6, 7, xlii. 15, 16, xliii. 19, 20, xlv. 27, l. 2) refer not to the Holy Land, but to the deserts through which the exiles would pass on their return ; and further, the language employed is far too general to be thus

limited to one event. It describes what frequently has occurred. The histories of Mexico and of Holland might furnish examples of such a contrast.

39. At first sight it seems as if there were no new subject. Another reverse is apparently described as befalling those who had just risen into prosperity. It may have happened, says the Poet, that the prosperity of this race, living at peace amid its herds and flocks, and the labours of its hands, has provoked the envy and the cupidity of some neighbouring tyrant. He destroys their harvest, and burns their homestead, and drives off their flocks ; but God pours contempt upon him, leads him astray in the wilderness to perish, and restores the victims of his tyranny to more than their former fortune.

40. This verse is a quotation from Job xii. 21, where it stands in a series of participial sentences describing the method of God's government. Here it is introduced abruptly, and is scarcely intelligible except by refer-

- 41 And He setteth the poor on high out of affliction,  
 And maketh families like a flock.  
 42 The upright see (it) and are glad,  
 And all iniquity hath shut her mouth.  
 43 Who is wise that he should observe these things,  
 And that they should understand the loving-  
 kindnesses of Jehovah?

ence to the passage in Job from whence it is taken.

41. LIKE A FLOCK: a figure expressive of large increase, as in Job xxi. 11.

42. The impression produced by

these acts of Divine Providence. Comp. Job v. 16.

43. The conclusion, in the form of a question, such as that with which Hosea concludes his prophecy, xiv. 9.

## PSALM CVIII.

THIS Psalm consists of portions of two others, the first half of it being taken from the 57th Psalm, ver. 7—11, and the latter half from the 60th, ver. 5—12. It bears the name of David, because the original passages both occur in Psalms ascribed to him as their author. But there is no reason for concluding that these fragments were thus united by David himself. Some later Poet probably adapted them to circumstances of his own time; possibly wished thus to commemorate some victory over Edom or Philistia. The change in the ninth verse, as compared with the corresponding passage in the 60th Psalm, may be held to favour this view. There are a few other not very important variations of the text, which will be pointed out in the notes.

For the interpretation at large, the Notes on the other two Psalms may be consulted.

[A SONG. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

1 MY heart is steadfast, O God,  
 I will sing and play, yea, even my glory.

1. MY GLORY, *i.e.* "my soul," with all those powers and faculties which

belong to the rational being, as created in the image of God. See Gen. ix. 6.



- 2 Awake, lute and harp,  
I will wake the morning-dawn.
- 3 I will give thanks unto Thee among the peoples, O  
Jehovah,  
And I will play unto Thee among the nations.
- 4 For great above the heavens is Thy loving-kindness,  
And thy truth (reacheth) unto the skies.
- 5 Be Thou exalted above the heavens, O God,  
And Thy glory above all the earth.
- 6 That Thy beloved may be delivered,  
Save with thy right hand, and answer me.
- 7 God hath spoken in His holiness :  
Let me exult, let me portion out Shechem,  
And the valley of Succoth let me measure.
- 8 Mine is Gilead, mine Manasseh,  
Ephraim also is the defence of my head ;  
Judah is my sceptre :
- 9 Moab is my washpot ;  
Upon Edom will I cast my shoe ;  
Over Philistia will I shout (in triumph).
- 10 Who will conduct me into the fortified city ?  
Who hath led me unto Edom ?
- 11 Hast not Thou, O God, cast us off ?  
And wilt Thou not go forth, O God, with our  
hosts ?
- 12 O give us help from the adversary,  
For vain is the salvation of man.
- 13 Through God we shall do valiantly,  
And HE shall tread down our adversaries.

3. JEHOVAH. In lvii. "Adonai" (Lord).

4. ABOVE: comp. cxiii. 4. In xxxvi. 5 the form of expression is somewhat different; "*in* the heavens . . . *unto* the clouds:" see also Jer. li. 9.

6—13. These verses are taken from

Ps. lx. The passage consists of two lines of the first strophe of that Psalm, and the second and third strophes complete.

9. On the change in this verse, instead of "Because of me, O Philistia, cry aloud," the principal variation in the Psalm, see note on lx. 3.

## PSALM CIX.

THIS is the last of the Psalms of imprecation, and completes the terrible climax. The remarks already made in the Note on xxxv. 22, in the Introduction to lxix., and the Note on ver. 22, may be consulted here.

This Psalm differs from the 69th in being levelled against one enemy chiefly, not against many. This circumstance may partly account for the even more intensely-wrought and detailed character of the curse. In the awfulness of its anathemas, the Psalm surpasses everything of the kind in the Old Testament. Who the person was who was thus singled out for execration, it is in vain to conjecture. Those who hold, in accordance with the Inscription, that the Psalm was written by David, suppose that Doeg or Cush, Shimei or Ahithophel, is the object of execration.

In Acts i. 20, St. Peter combines a part of the 8th verse of this Psalm, "his office let another take," with words slightly altered from the 25th verse of the 69th Psalm, and applies them to Judas Iscariot. Hence the Psalm has been regarded by the majority of expositors, ancient and modern, as a prophetic and Messianic Psalm. The language has been justified not as the language of David, but as the language of Christ, exercising His office of Judge, or, in so far as He had laid aside that office during his earthly life, calling upon His Father to accomplish the curse. It has been alleged that this is the prophetic foreshadowing of the solemn words, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; it were good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24). The curse, in the words of Chrysostom, "is a prophecy in form of a curse" (*προφητεία ἐν εἰδέει ἀπάς*).

The strain which such a view compels us to put on much of the language of the Psalm ought to have led long since to its abandonment. Not even the woes denounced by our Lord against the Pharisees can really be compared to the anathemas which are here strung together. Much less is there any pretence for saying that those words, so full of deep and holy sorrow, addressed to the traitor

in the Gospels, are merely another expression of the appalling denunciations of the Psalm. But terrible as these undoubtedly are, to be accounted for by the spirit of the Old Dispensation, not to be defended by that of the New, still let us learn to estimate them aright. This is the *natural* voice of righteousness persecuted. These are the accents of the martyr, not smarting only with a sense of personal suffering, but feeling acutely, and hating nobly, the triumph of wickedness.

The strains of this Psalm are strains which have lingered even in the Christian Church, not softened by "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Let anyone read the closing passage of Tertullian's treatise *De Spectaculis*, in which he does not hesitate to speak of the joy and exultation with which, at the Day of Judgement, he shall look upon the agonies of the damned, of the delight with which he shall see the kings of the earth, and the rulers who persecuted the Name of the Lord, melting in flames fiercer than those which they lighted for the Christians, philosophers burning with their disciples, tragic actors shrieking with real pain, the charioteer red upon his fiery wheel, and the wrestler tossing in the flames, till the fierce invective ends in a perfect shout of triumph as he thinks of the grandeur of the spectacle—let anyone, I say, read passages such as this, let him remember how long it was held a sacred duty by Christian Fathers and Bishops to persecute, and then let him pause before he passes a too sweeping judgement on "the fierce vindictiveness" of the Jew.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 O GOD of my praise, be not silent !
- 2 For a wicked mouth and a deceitful mouth have they  
opened against me,  
They have spoken against me with a false tongue ;

1. GOD OF MY PRAISE, *i.e.* the object of my praise (Jer. xvii. 14). "The name contains the ground of the prayer. The God whom the Psalmist has hitherto found reason to praise will now also give him fresh reason for praise. In this faith he

offers the prayer, 'Be not silent' (comp. xxviii. 1, xxxv. 22). God speaks when He interposes to judge and to save."—*Delitzsch*.

2. A WICKED MOUTH, &c., *lit.* "a mouth of the wicked, and a mouth of deceit."

- 3 Yea, with words of hatred have they compassed me  
about,  
And fought against me without a cause.  
4 For my love they are adversaries unto me,  
But I (give myself unto) prayer,  
5 They have requited me also evil for good,  
And hatred for my love.  
6 Set Thou a wicked man over him,  
And let an adversary stand at his right hand.  
7 When he is judged let him go forth condemned,  
And let his prayer be turned into sin.

4. THEY ARE ADVERSARIES UNTO ME, or "withstand me" (as in xxxviii. 20).

I (GIVE MYSELF UNTO) PRAYER, lit. "I (am) prayer," *i.e.* one who prays, having recourse to no other means of defence. So in cxx. 7, "I (am) peace;" cx. 3, "Thy people (are) freewillingness." The sense is, "I find refuge in prayer, committing myself and my cause to Thee." Comp. lxix. 12, 13.

5. For the sentiment comp. xxxv. 12, xxxviii. 20.

6. Leaving the mass of his enemies, the Psalmist suddenly singles out one, on whom he pours out the terrible curse which follows. See a similar transition in lv. 12. Ver. 1—5 do not give whole grounds for the curse; they are resumed in ver. 16—18.

SET, *i.e.* in an official capacity. Here, "appoint as judge," or "set over him with power and authority to punish."

AN ADVERSARY, or, "Satan." Let him have not only an unrighteous judge, but a malicious accuser. On the whole, I prefer the more general word "adversary," which is that of the margin of the E.V., especially as the same root occurs several times in the Psalm; see note on ver. 4. It is not indeed certain from the language

of ver. 7 that the process is supposed to take place before a human tribunal; for the "prayer" there spoken of is prayer to God, not supplication to the human judge. But, on the other hand, "a wicked man" in the parallelism, and the general tenour of what follows, are rather in favour of the rendering "adversary." In Zech. iii. 1, where there is the same form of expression,— "and he showed me Joshua the High Priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and the adversary (or, the Satan) *standing at his right hand* to be an adversary unto him"—Satan himself is doubtless meant, for the whole sense is that of a vision, as also in Job i. 6—13. This last passage shows how early the name occurred as a proper name. There is no pretence, therefore, for saying that the use of the name as that of the Evil Spirit is later than this Psalm.

7. WHEN HE IS JUDGED, &c. When his case is called let him GO FORTH, leave the court, with sentence pronounced against him "guilty."

HIS PRAYER, not addressed to the human judge for mitigation of the sentence, but here, as always, prayer to God. The criminal looking in vain for pity or justice at the hands of man, turns in his extremity to God; but even

- 8 Let his days be few,  
His office let another take.
- 9 Let his children be orphans,  
And his wife a widow.
- 10 Let his children also be continually vagabonds and  
beg,  
(Driven) from their ruined houses let them seek  
(their bread).
- 11 Let the extortioner lay snares for all that he hath,  
And let strangers spoil his labour.
- 12 Let there be none to continue kindness unto him,  
Neither let his fatherless children have any to  
favour (them).
- 13 Let his posterity be cut off,  
In the next generation let their name be blotted out.
- 14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with  
Jehovah,  
And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.

there, at the very fount of mercy, let mercy fail him, let his prayer aggravate his guilt. The utterance of such a wish is the most awful part of the imprecation. That prayer may thus draw down not forgiveness but wrath, see Is. i. 15 : Prov. xxviii. 9 ("He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination"), xv. 8, xxi. 27. But it is one thing to recognise this as a fact in the Divine government of man, it is another thing to imprecate it.

8. HIS OFFICE, implying that the person held a position of some importance. The LXX. ἐπισκοπή, whence in Acts i. 20 the passage is applied to Judas. In this verse a double loss is imprecated,—the loss of life, "let his days be few," and the loss of honour, "let another take his office;" in ver. 11 a third is added, the loss of property.

9. The curse passes in accordance with the Mosaic law ("visiting the

iniquity of the fathers upon the children") to the family of the offender. This has occasioned considerable perplexity to those who take the whole Psalm as prophetic, and aimed through-out at Judas Iscariot.

10. BEG. The object, "bread" (comp. xxxvii. 25, Prov. xx. 4), must be supplied here, and with the verb "seek" in the next member.

FROM THEIR RUINED HOUSES, lit. "from, out of, their ruins."

11. LAY SNARES FOR, admirably descriptive of the acts of the usurer.

12. CONTINUE KINDNESS to himself in distress, or to his children. See the same phrase, xxxvi. 10.

14, 15. The curse goes backward as well as forward. The whole race of the man is involved in it; root and branch he is accursed. Not the guilt of the individual only, but the guilt of all his guilty ancestors, is to be remembered and visited on his posterity. For the great law, comp. Matt. xxiii. 32—36.

- 15 Let them always be before Jehovah,  
That He may cut off the memory of them from the  
earth.
- 16 Because he remembered not to show kindness,  
But persecuted the afflicted man and the poor,  
And the broken-hearted, to put (them) to death ;
- 17 And he loved cursing, and it came unto him,  
And he had no delight in blessing, and it was far from  
him ;
- 18 Yea, he clothed himself with cursing as (with) a  
garment,  
And it came like water into his bowels,  
And like oil into his bones ;
- 19 Let it be unto him as a garment (wherewith) he  
covereth himself,  
And as a girdle that he is always girded withal.
- 20 This is the reward of mine adversaries from Jehovah,  
And of them that speak evil against my soul.

16. HE REMEMBERED NOT : therefore "let his iniquity be *remembered*," ver. 14.

TO PUT TO DEATH. The intensive form of the Hebrew verb denotes the eagerness, the relentless cruelty of the persecutors.

BECAUSE. We may paraphrase this and the following verses thus : "Because he persecuted the poor, because cursing was as water to his thirsty soul, as marrow and fatness to his bones, let it be unto him as a garment, let it wrap him round and envelope him, covering him from head to foot, and clinging to him like a girdle which never leaves his loins."

20. Two explanations of this verse are possible, according to the view we take of the former part of the Psalm. (1) It may mean, "My enemies may curse me thus, but after all this cursing returns upon themselves. This is the

reward they themselves receive from the hand of the righteous Judge" (comp. vii. 15, 16). (2) Those who take the passage ver. 6—19, not as the words of the Psalmist, but as the words of his enemies, suppose the genitive here to be subjective : "This is mine adversaries' award unto me ; this is the sentence they would procure against me from Jehovah, when they pray, Set Thou a wicked man over him," &c. But the addition "from Jehovah" renders the first explanation far the more probable : "This is the reward which my adversaries receive from Jehovah." The sentence is clear and intelligible. But on the other interpretation we should have expected, not "from Jehovah" meaning "supplicated from Jehovah," but rather the personal pronoun which can hardly be omitted, "This is mine adversaries' reward *unto me*."

- 21 But THOU, O Jehovah Lord, deal with me for Thy  
Name's sake,  
For Thy loving-kindness is good : deliver Thou me.  
22 For I am afflicted and poor,  
And my heart is wounded within me.  
23 As a shadow, when it lengtheneth, am I gone hence,  
I have been driven away as the locust.  
24 My knees have become weak through fasting,  
And my flesh hath failed of fatness.  
25 As for me,—I have become a reproach unto them ;  
When they see me they shake their head.  
26 Help me, O Jehovah my God,  
Save me according to Thy loving-kindness.  
27 And let them know that this is Thy hand ;  
Thou, Jehovah, hast done it.  
28 (Though) *they* curse, (yet) THOU blessest ;  
They arose and were put to shame,  
(But) Thy servant rejoiceth.  
29 Mine adversaries are clothed with confusion ;  
They cover themselves with their own shame (as with)  
a mantle.  
30 I will give thanks greatly to Jehovah with my  
mouth,

21. BUT THOU. He turns from his adversaries to God, from their curses to His loving-kindness. The emphatic pronoun, and the double name of God, both mark the earnestness of the appeal. See the use of these two names in lxxviii. 20, cxl. 7, cxli. 8 ; Hab. iii. 19. The second member of the verse might be rendered, "Deliver me, because Thy loving-kindness is good ;" or, again, the imperative, "Deliver me," might be transferred to the beginning of ver. 22.

23. AS A SHADOW, &c. Comp. sli. 11.

I HAVE BEEN DRIVEN AWAY, lit.

"I have been shaken out," as from a cloth, or mantle, or the deep folds of an Eastern robe. See the use of the verb in Neh. v. 13, where the shaking out of the upper part of the robe is symbolical of the Divine judgment.

AS THE LOCUST, as easily terrified and driven away. Comp. Job xxxix. 20 ; Exod. x. 19.

25. SHAKE THEIR HEAD. See on xxii. 7.

27. At the close of the Psalm the individual persecutor drops out of sight, and a return is made to the plural number, as in ver. 2-5.

30, 31. The Psalm closes with the

And in the midst of many will I praise Him.  
 31 For He standeth at the right hand of the poor,  
 To save (him) from those that judge his soul.

confident and joyful anticipation that the prayer in ver. 26, 27 is heard and answered.

There is, further, a remarkable contrast between these verses and verses 6, 7. There, the adversary stands at the right hand of the wicked man to accuse him; here, Jehovah, at the

right hand of the poor, defenceless victim, to protect him. There, the persecutor finds no mercy at the hands of the human judge, into whose hands he has fallen. Here, the Great Judge of all rescues "the poor" from "those that judge his soul."

## PSALM CX.

THIS Psalm claims emphatically to be the fruit and record of a Divine revelation. The words of the Poet, though shaped in the Poet's heart, come to him from the very sanctuary of the Most High. It is an oracle, an utterance of Jehovah, which he has heard, and which he is to declare to others. It is an oracle which concerns a king who reigns in Zion; it is addressed to one to whom the Poet does homage, calling him "Lord;" it assures him of the high favour of Jehovah, who lifts him to a share in His own regal dignity, giving him the victory over all his enemies. The Poet then pictures the king going forth to battle, surrounded by his youthful warriors, bright and numberless as the dew-drops on a summer's morn, willing to shed their heart's blood in his service, each one robed as a priest, each one a soldier of God.

As he gazes on the vision which has been called up by the first word from heaven, another divine word sounds in his ear; the word confirmed by the oath of Jehovah, that the king shall also be A PRIEST FOR EVER AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.

Then he follows the king in imagination to the war, sees him winning victory after victory with great slaughter, aided by God Himself in the fight, and securing the fruits of his victories by a pursuit of



his enemies which knows no check even in the burning heat of an Eastern sun.

If we were at liberty to adopt in this Psalm the same principles of interpretation which we have already adopted with regard to all the other Messianic Psalms, it would present no special difficulty. We might suppose it to have been written by some poet of David's time, who would naturally speak of David himself as his lord. In the first and lowest sense his words would apply to David as the theocratic king ; in their ultimate and highest sense they would be fulfilled in David's great Descendant, in Him who was both David's son and David's lord. But we seem to be precluded from this method of interpretation here by the argument which, according to all the Evangelists, our Lord, in disputing with the Pharisees, builds upon the first verse of the Psalm. "When the Pharisees were gathered together," St. Matthew tells us, "Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is He? They say unto Him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him lord, saying, The Lord said unto my lord, Sit thou on My right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call Him lord, how is He his son?" (xxii. 41—45). In St. Mark's Gospel still more emphatically : "And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? (For) *David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my lord, Sit thou on My right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David (therefore) himself calleth Him lord, and whence is He his son?*" (xii. 35—37). In St. Luke the quotation is introduced by "David himself saith in the Book of Psalms," but there is no other variation of any importance.

Now in this argument all turns on these two points : first, that David himself wrote the Psalm, and next, that in writing he was moved by the Holy Ghost. David himself, in a confessedly Messianic Psalm, is speaking not of himself, but of his great Descendant, and, so speaking, calls Him his *lord*. David was able to do this, was able in faith to recognise the true Divine greatness of One who, according to the flesh, would be his son, because he spake as the organ of a Divine revelation, as "he was moved by the Holy Ghost." This is clearly the scope of our Lord's argument. And if so, then it is plain that there can be no lower reference of the Psalm to David or any other Jewish monarch. It is a prediction, and a prediction of the Christ as the true King, as the everlasting Priest after the order of

Melchizedek. Nor is there anything to startle us in such a conclusion, unless we are prepared to deny altogether the possibility of a revelation of the future. The real difficulty is this, that, taking this view of the Psalm, it differs from all the other prophetic Psalms which, in their first intention at least, refer to David or Solomon, or some other Jewish monarch. And further, the language of the latter part of the Psalm is such as to be only fairly applicable to an earthly king literally reigning in Zion, and literally engaged in fierce and bloody war with his enemies ; and therefore it becomes the more difficult to understand on what principle the former part of the Psalm can be detached from a primary reference to some reigning monarch.

Whilst, however, we maintain what our Lord's argument compels us to maintain, that the Psalm is a prediction, we cannot tell to what extent it was a conscious prediction. We do not know how far David himself needed an interpretation of the vision in which he saw the majestic figure of the priestly King. His words may have been higher than his thoughts : they may have been pregnant with a meaning which he did not see. Unless we deny all inspiration, we must be prepared to admit this. At the same time, he is not wholly lifted out of his own age and time. If he speaks of a Messiah to come, and so far sees something of His greatness as to call him "lord," he is still suffered to conceive of Him, partially at least, as an earthly monarch fighting bloody battles with His enemies. The Psalm thus sinks down towards its close into—must we not say?—a lower key. The image which it presents to us is an image partly of fine gold, but partly of clay. We may indeed think ourselves at liberty to take the earthly words as symbols of spiritual truths. We may understand the victories of the Messiah as won in the kingdom of mind and heart, not as won with sword and spear. But we cannot suppose that it was with any such meaning that David wrote, "He shall judge among the nations, filling them with corpses." To his eye the struggle was one of flesh and blood, the victory such as he had himself obtained, the triumph that of an earthly conqueror.

Again, as we may allow that the prediction was partially at least unconscious, or that the vision was obscure, so we may also admit that it was vouchsafed in connection with circumstances and events to which it would stand in some definite relation. Prophecy—and the inspired songs of Psalmists are often prophecies—never seems wholly to forsake the ground of history. However extended the vista which stretches before him, that vista begins at the Prophet's feet.

The present is his home and his starting-point, though he may make "all the ages" his own. So we must look to some occurrence in David's life for the secret impulse of his song; and none seems so naturally and obviously to associate itself with the language of the Psalm, as that marked occurrence to which, in all probability, many other Psalms are due, the bringing up of the Ark of God into the Tabernacle which he had prepared for it in Zion. David on that occasion danced before the Ark, girded with a linen ephod, offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts;\* and thus, though but in a passing and temporary manner, prefigured in his own person the union of the kingly and priestly offices. Zion had become, by the removal of the Ark thither, the seat of Jehovah's visible Presence. The king, therefore, who made Zion his abode, was himself in some sense the assessor of Jehovah on His throne. Jerusalem, tradition said, was the ancient Salem, the capital of Melchizedek; and the memories which thus lingered about it and hallowed it may have helped David to understand how the true Ruler, Priest as well as King, should be Priest, not after the ancient and venerable order of Aaron, but after the order still more ancient and more venerable, of Melchizedek. It may, moreover, have been wisely ordered not only with a view to the future Antitype, but with regard to the present relation between the king and the priesthood, that no hint should be given of any unwarranted assumption on the part of the one of the duties belonging to the other. David did not interfere with the Levitical priesthood as existing in his own day; he pointed to a time when that priesthood would be superseded by a higher.

It may throw still further light on some of the expressions in the Psalm, if we recollect in what a spirit and with what resolves David had begun his reign, how jealously he desired to maintain the purity of his household and of his court (see Psalm ci.), how firm his determination was to have recognised under his sway the great ideal to which Israel was called, "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." For the people of the king in the Psalm who

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\* See 2 Sam. vi. 14-18. I own I cannot see any evidence in this passage that "David was recognised as the head of the priesthood," or that "the union of priesthood and kingship in David was more complete than in any other sovereign in Judah." We read of no repetition of such acts as those here recorded; the occasion itself was peculiar; and certainly no stress can be laid upon the expression "he offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord," for the same might be said of anyone who brought the victims to the priests to sacrifice, e.g. Solomon and all the congregation, 1 Kings viii. 5.

offer themselves willingly to fight his battle are priestly soldiers. If the king is henceforth to be a priest on his throne, he is so as embodying in his own person the priestly character of the people. He is not only the military chief, he is the religious head of the nation, the representative both of Church and State.

It has been said that it is of importance for the right understanding of the Psalm, and especially of the third verse of the Psalm, to bear in mind the military character of the Hebrew priesthood. It is perhaps of more importance to bear in mind that the whole nation was at once a nation of soldiers and a nation of priests. They were the soldiers of God pledged to a crusade, a holy war; pledged to the extermination of all idolatry and all wickedness, wherever existing. The character of the war marked the character of the soldiers. They were God's "sanctified ones." They were set apart as priests for His service. That zeal for God should have manifested itself chiefly in the priesthood, and that they should not have hesitated to draw the sword, is readily accounted for by the fact that in them the ideal of the nation culminated: they were in every sense its representatives.

The Psalm is not only quoted by our Lord as Messianic in the passages already referred to; it is more frequently cited by the New Testament writers than any other single portion of the ancient Scriptures. Comp., besides those passages in the Gospels, Acts ii. 34, 35; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Heb. i. 13, v. 6, vii. 17, 21, x. 13.

In later Jewish writings, in the Talmud and the Rabbis, nearly every verse of the Psalm is quoted as referring to the Messiah.

### [A PSALM OF DAVID.]

## I THE oracle of Jehovah unto my lord : " Sit Thou at My right hand,

I. SIT THOU AT MY RIGHT HAND, *i.e.* on My throne. The expression denotes that the person thus honoured occupied the second place in the kingdom, taking rank immediately after the king, and also sharing as viceroy in the government. The custom was a common one in antiquity. We find

allusion to it both amongst the Arabs and the Greeks. The viceroys of the ancient Arab kings sat on the right hand of the king. Ibn Cotaiba says: "The *Kidafat* is the dignity of sitting next to the king. But the *Radaf* (he who holds rank after the king) sits on his right hand, and if the king drinks,

## Until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

the Radaf drinks next, before all others; and if the king goes out upon an expedition, the Radaf sits on his seat and acts in his room till he returns; and if the king's army goes forth to war, the Radaf receives a fourth part of the booty."—EICH-HORN, *Monum. Antiquiss. Hist. Arabum*, p. 220.

Similarly the Greek poets spoke of their gods as *σύνεδροι, πάρεδροι, σύνθρονοι* with Zeus. So Pindar (*Fragm.* Ed. Schneider, p. 55) speaks of Minerva as associated with Zeus in his sovereignty, and receiving his commands for the other gods: *δεξίαν κατὰ χεῖρα τοῦ πατρὸς καθεζομένην, τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῖς θεοῖς ἀποδέχασθαι*, on which Aristides observes that Minerva was *ἀγγέλου μείζων*, and that she *τῶν ἀγγέλων ἄλλοις ἄλλα ἐπιτάττει, πρώτη παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς παραλαμβάνουσα*. And Callimachus (*Hymn. in Apoll.*, ver. 28) says that Apollo is able to reward the Chorus, if they sing to please him, because he sits at the right hand of Zeus, *δύναται γάρ, ἔπει Διὶ δεξιὸς ἦσται*. In both these passages it is clear that this session at the right hand of Zeus indicates not merely a mark of honour conferred, but actual participation in the royal dignity and power.

It is true that we have no exactly parallel instance in the O. T. When Solomon placed Bathsheba on his throne, and gave her a seat at his right hand (1 Kings ii. 19), this was done as a mark of honour, not as associating her with himself in the government. So also in Ps. xlv. 9, the queen consort stands at the right hand of the king as the place of honour—though possibly there the expression may denote more than this, may signify her joint sovereignty, for the Tyrians are said to entreat her favour with gifts, ver. 12. The same

mark of honour was conferred by the king of Syria on Jonathan (1 Macc. x. 63). There is a more nearly parallel passage in Matt. xx. 20, &c. (comp. Mark x. 35, &c.), where the mother of Zebedee's children asks for her two sons that they may sit one on the right hand and the other on the left of our Lord in His kingdom. It is evident that in the Psalm not an occasional honour, but a permanent dignity is meant, for Jehovah is to aid the king in effecting the subjugation of his enemies: he is to sit at Jehovah's right hand till that subjugation is effected.

If, then, this be the meaning; if the solemn address "Sit Thou at My right hand," is equivalent to saying, "Be Thou associated with Me in My kingly dignity, in My power and universal dominion," then the best comment on the passage is to be found, as even some of the Jewish interpreters have seen, in Dan. vii. 13, 14, where "one like the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven, and is brought unto the Ancient of Days, and there is given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him." The two passages, the one from the Psalm and the other from Daniel, are, in fact, combined by our Lord Himself, when standing before the high priest, He says, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." The same interpretation is given by St. Peter, Acts ii. 34–36. Comp. Ephes. i. 20–22; Heb. i. 13, 14.

UNTIL. St. Paul, in 1 Cor. xv. 24–28, gives a limitation to the meaning of the passage which does not lie on the surface. He argues from the words of this verse that Christ must reign until (*i.e.* only until)

- 2 The sceptre of Thy might Jehovah shall stretch forth out of Zion (saying):  
 "Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies."

He has put all enemies under His feet, and that then His mediatorial reign will cease, and He will give up the kingdom to God, even to the Father. But this sense is not necessarily conveyed by the use of the conjunction "until." It does not follow that what takes place *until* a certain limit is reached must cease immediately afterwards. Thus, for instance, in cxii. 8, "He shall not be afraid *until* he see his desire upon his enemies;" Gen. xxviii. 15, "I will not leave thee *until* I have done that which I have spoken to thee of;" Deut. vii. 24, "There shall no man be able to stand before thee *until* thou have destroyed them,"—the "until" is clearly not to be pressed as if it were equivalent to "only until, not afterwards." The context must determine in each case whether the "until" is inclusive or exclusive of a time subsequent to the limit mentioned, and here the general tenour of the Psalm does not seem to favour a restriction to previous time. This is accordingly one of those instances in which a peculiar turn is given in the N. T. to the language of the Old.

THY FOOTSTOOL, lit. "a stool for Thy feet," an emblem of complete subjection; comp. viii. 6, xviii. 38. The allusion is probably to the custom of conquerors placing their feet on the necks of the conquered. See Josh. x. 24, 25.

2. Having announced the oracle which he has received by Divine revelation, the Poet turns to address the king, and declares by what means he is to conquer, viz. by the help of God, and the willing courage and self-sacrifice of his own people. The Son of David has His royal seat

in Zion, the city of David. Thence, by the grace of God, He shall give laws to the world, for Jehovah Himself, whose vicegerent He is, in whose strength He rules, holds and sways His sceptre. So the throne of even the earthly king is in like manner called the throne of Jehovah (1 Chron. xxviii. 5, xxix. 23).

THE SCEPTRE OF THY MIGHT, *i.e.* of "Thy kingly majesty," as in Jer. xlviii. 17; Ezek. xix. 14. Chrysostom plays upon the word *ῥάβδος* (LXX.) as a rod of strength and consolation, as in xxiii. 4; a rod of chastisement, as in ii. 9, 1 Cor. iv. 21; a symbol of kingly rule, as in Is. xi. 1, Ps. xlv. 6. It was by this rod, he says, that the disciples wrought when they subdued the world in obedience to the command, "Go and make disciples of all nations;" a rod far more powerful than that of Moses, "for that divided rivers, this brake in pieces the ungodliness of the world." And then with profound truth he adds, "Nor would one err who should call the Cross the rod of power; for this rod converted sea and land, and filled them with a vast power. Armed with this rod, the Apostles went forth throughout the world, and accomplished all that they did, beginning at Jerusalem." The Cross which to men seemed the very emblem of shame and weakness, was, in truth, the power of God.

RULE THOU, or, "Have dominion," the same word as in lxxii. 8. The imperative contains in itself a prediction or promise of fulfilment. See for the same use of the imperat. xxxvii. 3. Gen. xx. 7. These words are probably (as many of the best

- 3 Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day that  
 Thou warrest,  
 (Clad) in holy vestments :  
 (As the dew) from the womb of the morning,

commentators suppose) addressed by Jehovah to the King. Others think that the Poet himself thus speaks.

3. **THY PEOPLE.** In the midst of His enemies, the King has His own faithful adherents. God, who holds the sceptre of His Anointed, and assures Him of victory, has also given Him a willing people, working in their hearts by His Spirit joyfulness and courage, and ready self-sacrifice. Comp. Is. xxviii. 5, 6, "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory . . . and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate."

**OFFER THEMSELVES WILLINGLY,** lit. "are free-will offerings," *i.e.* give, devote themselves as a willing sacrifice. Comp. for the form of expression cix. 4, "I am prayer," and for the sacrificial sense of the word Exod. xxxv. 29. Lev. xxii. 18, 21, 23, Am. iv. 5. This interpretation harmonizes best with the priestly character assigned both to the warriors and to their leader. Otherwise the word often loses its sacrificial meaning; and so here many render, "Thy people are most willing," lit. "are willingnesses" (plur. for sing. as more emphatic, comprising every possible aspect of the idea contained in the word, alacrity, readiness, devotion in every form). They are no hireling soldiery; they serve not of constraint nor for filthy lucre. For this sense of the word, see the notes on li. 12, liv. 6, and comp. Hos. xiv. 4, "I will love them *freely*."

**IN THE DAY THAT THOU WARREST,** lit. "in the day of Thy *host*," *i.e.* in the day Thou musterest Thy

host to the battle; or we may render, "in the day of Thy *power*," for the word occurs in both significations.

**IN HOLY VESTMENTS.** Comp. xxix. 2, xcvi. 9. The youthful warriors who flock to the standard of the king are clad in holy attire, combatants in a holy war. Comp. Is. xiii. 3, 4, "I have commanded *My sanctified ones*, I have also called My mighty ones for Mine anger. . . . The Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle." (See also 1 Sam. xxv. 28; Jer. vi. 4, "*Sanctify* ye war against her;" li. 27, "Raise a standard, blow a trumpet among the nations, *sanctify* the nations against her.") But more is implied perhaps than this. The "holy garments" are priestly garments. They who wear them are priestly warriors, in the train of a priestly leader. If so, the imagery is the same as in Rev. xix. 14, where it is said that "armies in heaven followed Him (whose name is called the Word of God) upon white horses, *clothed in fine linen, white and clean*." The garments of Aaron and the priests were of linen, Exod. xxviii. 39, 42, Lev. vi. 10, xvi. 4, and they were called "holy garments," Exod. xxviii. 4, Lev. xvi. 4. The Hebrew word there rendered *garments* is different from that employed in this and the two parallel passages in the Psalms, but apparently the same thing is intended. Some have supposed that the allusion is to a solemn religious service held before going out to battle, but we have no evidence of the existence of any such custom.

- (Is) to Thee the dew of Thy young men  
 4 Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent :  
 "Thou art a priest for ever  
 After the order of Melchizedek."

THY YOUNG MEN, lit. "Thy youth." Elsewhere the word means *the time of youth*, as in Eccl. xi. 9, 10; and so it has been understood here, the object being thus to mark the vigour and prowess of the leader, as the dew denotes fresh and early beauty. But the parallelism requires us to take "Thy youth" here in a collective sense, = "Thy young men."

The dew which, especially in the East, falls so copiously, is most probably employed here as a figure denoting *infinite multitude*. Comp. the use of the figure in 2 Sam. xvii. 11, 12, "Therefore I counsel that all Israel be gathered to thee . . . *as the sand* that is by the sea *for multitude* . . . and we will light upon him *as the dew* falleth on the ground," &c. Others find the point of comparison here in the *brightness* and *freshness* of the dew; and this may be suggested by the figure as well as multitude. In Mic. v. 7 the point of comparison seems to be different: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from Jehovah, as showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man nor waiteth for the sons of men." Here the point is, that the dew, like the rain, is a wonderful gift of God, with which man has no concern.

4. This verse contains the great central revelation of the Psalm. How weighty it is, and of how vast import, may be inferred from the solemnity of the introduction "Jehovah hath sworn" (see on the Divine oath, Heb. vi. 13; 17, 18), and this is carried to the very highest pitch by the addition of the words "And will not repent," *i.e.* the decree is abso-

lutely immutable (for God Himself is said to have repented, Gen. vi. 6). It is the solemn inauguration of the Messiah in time to the priestly office. It is the first intimation of the union of the kingly and priestly functions in His person. See the later typical representation of the same truth in Zech. vi. 12, 13. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwells on the significance of each expression in this verse: "with an oath"—"for ever"—"After the order of Melchizedek."

(1) He lays stress on the fact that this solemn inauguration into the priestly office was by an oath, which was not the case with the institution of the Levitical priest. This, he observes, is a proof that Christ is Mediator of a better covenant than that of Moses (Heb. vii. 20—22).

(2) He argues that as the priesthood rests on an unchangeable *foundation*, so it is in its *nature* unchangeable: a Priest *for ever*. "He, because He abideth for ever, hath His priesthood unchangeable," vii. 23, 28.

(3) He enlarges upon all those points in which Melchizedek, rather than Aaron, was the most fitting type of Christ; passing over, however, in entire silence, that which in the Patristic and Romish expositors holds a prominent place, the bringing forth of bread and wine. Another and essential feature of the type which is implied in Heb. vii. is too often overlooked, *viz.* that the priesthood of Melchizedek was not only before the law, but was a Gentile priesthood, and therefore the most fitting type of a universal priesthood.

5—7. The martial strain of ver. 2—4 is resumed. There the might



- 5 The Lord at thy right hand  
 Hath crushed kings in the day of His wrath.  
 6 He shall judge among the nations,  
 He hath filled (them) with corpses,

of the King and his army were described, here the conflict and the victory. It is remarkable how these earthly images, this warlike tone, predominates, considering the language of ver. 4. The priestly character of the monarch, the very name of Melchizedek, who was not only king of righteousness, but king of Salem, that is, king of peace (Heb. vii.), would have led us to expect anything but the picture of a battle-field covered with corpses and a leader in full pursuit of his enemies. Still it must not be forgotten that we have a parallel example in the New Testament. See Rev. xix. 11—16.

5. THE LORD ('Adonai). This form of the plural is never used except as a Divine Name. The Targum gives as the equivalent here "the Shechinah of Jehovah." Is this name here applied to Jehovah or to the King? Many expositors argue that the King must be meant; and, on the other side, it has been argued that (1) the name of 'Adonai is never elsewhere given to the Messiah, or to any but God; (2) that the expression "in the day of His wrath" is more naturally to be interpreted of God than of the Messiah.

The arguments are so nearly balanced, that it is difficult to decide, although most of the recent expositors—even those who hold to the Messianic interpretation—understand by 'Adonai, ver. 5, not the Messiah, but Jehovah. It should be observed, however, that there is no reason why the King, who is called 'Elohim (God) in Ps. xlv., should not be called 'Adonai (Lord) in this Psalm. On

the other hand, to assume a change of subject, whether that change is to be introduced at the beginning of ver. 6 or ver. 7 (see below), is perfectly justifiable; and it is more justifiable in this instance, because Jehovah and the King are so closely associated, that what the one does the other may be said to do. It is Jehovah's throne on which the King sits, it is Jehovah's hand which wields the King's sceptre: Jehovah discomfits the King's enemies, and the King pursues them in their flight. It may be remarked, further, that throughout the Psalm the address is directed to the King and Priest, and that in eix. 31 Jehovah "stands at the right hand" of the poor to succour and defend him, as here at the right hand of the King.

Taking this view, however, it is still difficult to say whether the King is the subject of both verses 6 and 7, or only of ver. 7. I prefer, however, regarding the King as the subject of ver. 6.

KINGS. There may, perhaps, be an allusion to the glorious victories of old, such as that of Moses, Num. xxi.; of Joshua, Josh. x.; of Deborah, Judg. v. 3, 19; of Gideon, Judg. viii. Comp. Ps. lxxviii. 12. If so, this would account for the use of the past tense, "*hath* crashed," all God's judgements having been judgements executed on behalf of His Anointed. But as the future tenses are interchanged with the past in the next two verses, it seems better to regard the former as indicating that the victory is yet future, while the latter imply that it is represented so vividly to the Poet's eye that he can conceive of it as already accomplished.

He hath crushed the heads over wide lands.  
 7 Of the brook in the way shall He drink ;  
 Therefore shall He lift up (His) head.

6. THE HEADS. The word is singular, but used apparently in a collective sense, either literally as in lxxviii. 21, or metaphorically of *rulers, princes*.

7. OF THE BROOK IN THE WAY, or, if we follow the accents, "Of the brook (or torrent) shall he drink in the way." The victorious leader,

who has made so terrible a slaughter that the field of battle is covered with corpses, is now seen pursuing his enemies. Wearied with the battle and the pursuit, he stops for a moment on the way to refresh himself by drinking of the torrent rushing by, and then "lifts up his head," derives new vigour to continue the pursuit.

I subjoin the following paraphrase of the Psalm :—

"Thus saith Jehovah,—it is His revelation that I hear, it is His word addressed to one who, though He be my son, is yet my lord,—‘I give Thee honour and dignity equal to My own, I associate Thee with Myself in kingly rule and dominion, until I have subdued every enemy who shall dare to lift himself up against Thee.’"

Then, turning to the King who has thus been solemnly placed on the throne of Jehovah, and who rules as His vicegerent in Zion, the Psalmist says : "From Zion, Thy royal seat, shall Jehovah Himself, on whose throne Thou sittest, stretch out the sceptre of Thy dominion. So close shall be the fellowship between Him and Thee. Thou shalt sit on His throne, He shall wield Thy sceptre, His might shall be Thy might, His kingdom shall be Thy kingdom, and Thou shalt not only subdue Thine enemies, but before they are yet vanquished Thou shalt rule in the midst of them. When Thou goest forth to war, Thine own people shall flock with glad and willing hearts to Thy standard. They shall come clad, not in armour, but in holy vestments as ministering priests, for Thou hast consecrated them to be Thy priestly soldiers. They shall come a youthful host, in numbers numberless as the dew, bright and fresh as the dew from the womb of the morning.

"Yet another solemn word concerning Thee have I heard. It is a word confirmed by an oath, the oath of the Most High, which cannot be broken. By that oath He hath made Thee Priest as well as King ; King Thou art, Priest Thou shalt be henceforth ; Priest not after the law of a carnal commandment, or by descent through the Levitical

priesthood, but after the order of Melchizedek,—Priest therefore not of the Jew only, but of the Gentile also,—Priest not for a time, but for ever.”

Then, looking on the leader, the host, the conflict, the Poet exclaims : “The Lord, the God of hosts who is with Thee, O King, who is at Thy right hand to succour and give Thee the victory in the battle, hath already crushed the rival monarchs that dispute Thy sway. Thou shalt be a judge and ruler among the nations whom He has given Thee as Thine inheritance. The vast battle-field is strewn with the corpses of Thy foes. Far and wide hast Thou extended Thy conquests, vanquishing one leader after another ; and Thou shalt reap the fruit of Thy victories like a warrior who, pressing hotly on the rear of his enemies as they flee before him, scarcely pauses for a moment to snatch a hasty draught from the wayside brook, and then with renewed ardour, with head erect and kindling eye, continues the pursuit. Thus shall victory be crowned, and not a foe remain.”

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## PSALM CXI.

THIS Psalm and the next are framed exactly on the same model. They are both alphabetical Psalms. In both the letters of the alphabet mark not only the beginning of verses, as in other Psalms, but the beginning of each several clause of the verses. In both there are exactly twenty-two lines, each line consisting usually of three words ; and in both the order of the alphabet is strictly preserved, which is not the case in other alphabetical Psalms (see, for instance, xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii.). Finally, so exactly does the structure of the two Psalms correspond, that the first eight verses in both consist each of two lines, and the last two verses of three lines.

But the Psalms answer to one another not only in structure, but in thought. The same significant phrases occur in both, and occur in such a way as to mark the mutual relation of the two Poems. In the 11th, the mighty deeds, the glory, the righteousness of Jehovah

are celebrated in the assembly of the upright. In the 112th, the righteousness, the goodness, the blessedness of the upright themselves is described and enlarged upon. The one sets forth God, His work and His attributes ; the other tells us what are the work and character of those who fear and honour God. Thus in cxi. 3 it is said of Jehovah that "His righteousness standeth fast for ever ;" in cxii. 3 the same thing is affirmed of the man that feareth Jehovah. In cxi. 4 it is declared of Jehovah that "He is gracious and of tender compassion ;" in cxii. 4 the same character is given of the upright. In the 111th Psalm the faithfulness of Jehovah to His covenant is magnified (ver. 5, 9) ; in the 112th the faithfulness of the righteous man, his trust in Jehovah, is exhibited (ver. 7, 8).

In spite of the acrostic arrangement by which the writer has chosen to fetter himself, this Psalm is more than a mere string of gnomic sentences. The thoughts have a real inner connection. The Psalmist begins by declaring that with his whole heart he will give thanks to God ; and because to keep his thankfulness and his ascription of praise to himself would be to rob God of half His honour, therefore will he give utterance to his feelings, and give utterance to them in the fitting place, "in the congregation of the upright." Abundant subject for such praise is to be found in the works of God : the more these are studied, the more will their marvellous and unsearchable character be seen, and the greater the delight which will be experienced in the study. Everywhere the glory of God will be traced, everywhere will the footsteps of His unchangeable righteousness be discovered. At all times His works testify of Him, rebuking the apathy and the forgetfulness of men, and calling them to Him who is "gracious and of tender compassion."

He has shown His goodness in never failing to supply the need of His people : He gave them manna in the wilderness, He gave them the spoil of the heathen in Canaan : He thus kept with them the covenant which He had made of old with their fathers. Not unmindful of other nations, it is to His people that He has specially revealed Himself ; He has given them their promised inheritance. As in His works so in His commandments, as in His providence so in His word, the same truth and faithfulness are visible. Therefore His commandments cannot fail ; they remain the sure everlasting pillars of His kingdom. The great seal of all is the redemption which He accomplished for His people. He who brought them out of Egypt will never suffer His covenant to fail.

Is it not the highest wisdom to fear such a God as this, so great in His works, so true in His word, so faithful to His covenant? To fear God and to keep His commandments is the whole of man, to praise Him man's highest employment both now and for ever.\*

I HALLELUJAH!

- Aleph I will give thanks to Jehovah with (my)  
whole heart,  
Beth In the assembly of the upright and in the  
congregation.  
2 Gimel Great are the works of Jehovah,  
Daleth Sought out of all them that have delight  
therein.  
3 He His doings are (full of) honour and majesty,  
Vau And His righteousness standeth fast for ever.  
4 Zain He hath made a memorial for His wonderful  
works ;  
Cheth Gracious and of tender compassion is Jehovah.  
5 Teth He hath given food to them that fear Him,

1. ASSEMBLY. A narrower and more intimate circle is implied than in the word "congregation," which follows.

2. THE WORKS OF JEHOVAH, *i.e.* specially His mighty deeds on behalf of His people. These are said to be—

SOUGHT OUT, the objects of earnest and devout meditation and study, studied that they may be known, studied that they may be lived. The same law holds of God's revelation in His word as of His revelation in nature. They only who *search* diligently and who have a *delight* therein can discover His wonders either in the one or the other.

3. HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS STANDETH FAST FOR EVER. Comp. cxii. 3, where the same is said of the righteousness

of the man who fears Jehovah, and hath delight in His commandments. See also xix. 9.

4. A MEMORIAL. Comp. Num. xvi. 40, Josh. iv. 6, 7.

FOR (or "belonging to") HIS WONDERFUL WORKS. By means of all that He has so marvellously wrought on behalf of Israel, He has reared, so to speak, a monument to His glory.

5. FOOD, or perhaps rather "prey" or "booty." "The use of this word," says Mr. Grove, "especially when taken in connection with the words rendered 'good understanding' in ver. 10, which should rather be as in the margin, 'good success,' throws a new and unexpected light over the familiar phrases of this beautiful Psalm. It seems to show

\* With this Psalm begins another series of Hallelujah Psalms, cxi. cxiii., cxv.—cxvii.

- Yod        He remembered His covenant for ever.  
 6 Caph     The might of His works hath He declared to  
               His people,  
 Lamed    To give them the heritage of the nations.  
 7 Mem     The works of His hand are truth and judge-  
               ment ;  
 Nun       Faithful are all His statutes ;  
 8 Samech   They are upheld for ever and ever,  
 Ayin      They are done in truth and uprightness.  
 9 Pe        He hath sent redemption to His people ;  
               Tsaddi   He hath commanded His covenant for ever ;  
               Koph     Holy and awful is His Name.  
 10 Resh    The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom,

how inextinguishable was the warlike predatory spirit in the mind of the writer, good Israelite and devout worshiper of Jehovah as he was. Late as he lived in the history of his nation, he cannot forget 'the power' of Jehovah's 'works,' by which his forefathers acquired the 'heritage of the heathen ;' and to him, as to his ancestors when conquering the country, it is still a firm article of belief that those who fear Jehovah shall obtain most of the spoil of His enemies—those who obey His commandments shall have the best success in the field."—*Dict. of the Bible*, art. MEAT.

To the above may be added the probable allusion to the deliverance from Egypt, and the occupation of Canaan, in ver. 9. It is doubtful, however, whether the rendering "good success" in ver. 10 is correct.

Delitzsch, on the other hand, supposes that by the "memorial" is meant the Festivals, which were instituted to keep alive the remembrance of God's mighty works in the days of Moses, and by the "food," the meal accompanying the sacrifices, and the Paschal feast. [It is with reference

to this verse, doubtless, that Luther calls the Psalm "an Easter or Paschal Psalm."] Theodore, Augustine, and others understand by this "food" in the N. T. sense the Eucharist, and the Psalm has been accordingly used as a Eucharistic Psalm. It is a curious instance of the way in which a word may draw to itself a whole train of thought with which it has really no connection.

8. UPHELD ; not, however, by any external proof, but by their own inherent power.

9. HE HATH SENT. There is probably an allusion to the redemption from Egypt, and in the next member to the Sinaitic covenant. Then Jehovah revealed Himself as the holy and the awful God. But here, and throughout the Psalm, I have rendered the past tenses as perfects, because the reference is evidently not exclusively to the past, but also to the still present results of the "redemption" and the "covenant."

HE HATH COMMANDED. The verb is used, as in cv. 8, in its original sense of *appointing, establishing*.

10. THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM. Comp. Job xxviii. 28.

Shin    A good understanding have all they that do  
          them :

Tau     His praise endureth for ever.

A GOOD UNDERSTANDING, or perhaps rather "understanding of, insight into, that which is good." Comp. Prov. iii. 4, xiii. 15 ; 2 Chron. xxx. 22.

THEY THAT DO THEM. The reference of the plur. pron. "them"

can only be to the "statutes" mentioned in ver. 7. The P. B. V. "thereafter." Augustine lays stress on this "doing." "*Bonus est intellectus*," he says ; "quis negat ? Sed intelligere et non facere periculosum est. *Bonus ergo facientibus.*"

## PSALM CXII.

ON this Psalm, see the Introduction to Psalm cxi. In its general character it resembles Psalms i. and xxxvii. In the Vulgate the title is "Conversio Aggæi et Zachariæ."

I            HALLELUJAH !

Aleph    Blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah,  
Beth      That delighteth greatly in His commandments.

2 Gimel    His seed shall become mighty in the earth.  
Daleth    The generation of the upright shall be blessed ;

3 He        Wealth and riches are in his house,  
Vau        And his righteousness standeth fast for ever.

1. Comp. i. 1, 2.

2. MIGHTY. The word is commonly used of *warlike* strength and prowess, but sometimes also in a more general sense of wealth, substance, &c. So Boaz is called "a mighty man of wealth," Ruth ii. 1 ; and Kish, 1 Sam. ix. 1 ; see also 2 Kings xv. 20.

3. WEALTH AND RICHES. So in the Proverbs these are said to be the gift of Wisdom to them that love her. See iii. 16, viii. 18, xxii. 4. So even in the New Testament : see Mark x. 29, 30.

HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, &c. It seems a bold thing to say this of anything human, and yet it is true ; for all

- 4 Zain      There ariseth a light in the darkness for the  
                 upright,  
Cheth      (He is) gracious, and of tender compassion,  
                 and righteous.
- 5 Teth      Happy is the man who showeth favour and  
                 lendeth,  
Yod      He shall maintain his cause in (the) judgement ;
- 6 Caph      For he shall not be moved for ever,  
Lamed      The righteous shall be in everlasting remem-  
                 brance.
- 7 Mem      Because of (any) evil tidings he shall not fear :  
Nun      His heart is established trusting in Jehovah.
- 8 Samech      His heart is upheld, he cannot fear,  
Ayin      Until he see (his desire) upon his adversaries.

human righteousness has its root in the righteousness of God. It is not merely man striving to copy God. It is God's gift and God's work. There is a living connection between the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man, and therefore the imperishableness of the one appertains to the other also. Hence the same thing is affirmed here of the human righteousness which in cxi. 3, is affirmed of the Divine.

4. A LIGHT FOR THE UPRIGHT. Comp. xcvi. 11, "Light is sown for the upright."

In the next clause of the verse the three adjectives occasion some difficulty. Although they are in the singular number, whilst "the upright" in the preceding line is plural, it seems most natural to take them as intended further to describe the character of the upright. The first two epithets, elsewhere applied only to Jehovah, are so applied in cxi. 3, and the relation of the two Psalms makes it almost certain, therefore, that they are here applied to His servants. See also Matt. v. 45, 48 ; Is. lviii. 8. The change from the plural to the singular

is certainly unusually harsh, as the epithets are loosely strung together, without anything to mark their reference ; but this may be accounted for in some measure by the requirement of the alphabetical arrangement.

Others take the three attributes as in opposition with the noun "light" in the preceding clause, God Himself being the "Light" (as in xxvii. 1) : comp. Is. x. 17, lx. 1-3 ; Mal. iv. 2 : "There hath arisen a Light, viz. He who is gracious," &c.

5. HESHA LL MAINTAIN, &c., mentioned as an instance of his happiness, which is then confirmed by what follows, ver. 6.

6. IN EVERLASTING REMEMBRANCE. Comp. Prov. x. 7.

7. Further evidence of the happiness of such a man—a clear conscience and a heart that trusts not in itself but in God, and thus is raised above all fear. The epithets "established," "trusting," "upheld," are all strikingly descriptive of the true attitude of faith, as that which *leans upon* and *is supported by* God. The two last are combined also in Is. xxvi. 3.



- 9 Pe He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor;  
 Tsaddi His righteousness standeth fast for ever,  
 Koph His horn shall be exalted with glory.  
 10 Resh The wicked shall see (it) and be grieved,  
 Shin He shall gnash his teeth and melt away,  
 Tau The desire of the wicked shall perish.

9. HE HATH DISPERSED. The verb occurs in Prov. xi. 24, in the same way, of the free and active exercise of charity. This verse is quoted by St. Paul when exhorting the Corinthians to liberal contributions on

behalf of the poor, 2 Cor. ix. 9.

HIS HORN; see on lxxv. 5.

10. SHALL GNASH HIS TEETH, as in xxxv. 16, xxxvii. 12.

MELT AWAY, *i.e.* through jealousy and annoyance.

## PSALM CXIII.

WITH this Psalm begins "the Hallel" which was sung at the three Great Feasts, at the Feast of Dedication, and at the New Moons. At the Feast of the Passover it was divided into two parts, the first of which, consisting of Psalms cxiii. cxiv., was sung before the meal, that is, before the second cup was passed round; and the second, consisting of Psalms cxv.—cxviii., after the meal, when the fourth cup had been filled. This last, probably, was "the hymn" which our Lord and His Apostles are said to have sung (*ἐμψάλλοντες*, Matt. xxvi. 30, Mark xiv. 26), after His last Passover.

Paulus Burgensis styles Psalms cxiii.—cxviii. *Alleluia Judæorum magnum*, and this has been a very usual designation. But according to the ancient Jewish tradition this series of Psalms is called simply "the Hallel," or sometimes "the Egyptian Hallel," whereas the name "Great Hallel" is given to Psalm cxxxvi.

The Psalm may be said to be a connecting link between the Song of Hannah and the Magnificat of the Virgin.

It may be viewed as consisting of three strophes.

1. The first exhorts to the praise of Jehovah as the one great object of praise. Ver. 1—3.

2. The second sets forth His greatness. Ver. 4—6.

3. The third magnifies His condescension. Ver. 7—9.

The second and third of these divisions, however, are closely connected, and, in fact, run into one another.

# 1 HALLELUJAH !

Praise, O ye servants of Jehovah,  
Praise the Name of Jehovah.

2 Blessed be the Name of Jehovah

From this time forth and for evermore.

3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the  
same

Let the Name of Jehovah be praised.

4 Jehovah is lifted up above all nations,

His glory is above the heavens.

5 Who is like Jehovah our God,

Who sitteth throned on high,

6 Who stoopeth down to see

(What is) done in the heaven and in the earth ?

7 He raiseth the miserable from the dust,

(And) lifteth up the poor from (the) dunghill,

8 That he may set (him) with princes,

(Even) with the princes of His people.

1. SERVANTS OF JEHOVAH ; all Israel as a nation consecrated to His service ; comp. lxi. 36, cxxv. 1 (where this same verse is found, but with the clauses transposed), cxxvi. 2.

3. LET THE NAME, &c. This rendering seems preferable in the context, though we might render "is worthy to be praised," as in xviii. 3, or simply "is praised."

5. SITTETH THRONED ON HIGH, lit.

"maketh high to sit ;" as in the next verse, "maketh low to see." The same antithesis occurs cxxviii. 6. It denotes not merely the omniscience of God, but His greatness and His condescension. Comp. viii. 4, and the striking expansion of the same thought, Is. lvii. 15.

7. This and the next verse are almost word for word from the Song of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. 8.

9 Who maketh the barren woman to keep house,  
 As a joyful mother of children.  
 Hallelujah !

9. The curse of barrenness was so bitter a thing in Jewish eyes, that its removal was hailed as a special mark of Divine favour. The allusion to it here was suggested, doubtless, by Hannah's history, and by the strain of Hannah's song already quoted : see 1 Sam. ii. 5.

MAKETH THE BARREN WOMAN,  
 &c. : lit. "maketh her who is barren

of (in) the house to dwell," *i.e.* maketh her who through barrenness, has no family to have a family, and so have a fixed, settled habitation in the land. The use of the phrase in lxxviii. 6 is somewhat different, as there the word "house" means *the place of abode* ; here, the *family*. Compare the expression "to make a house," Exod. i. 21 ; 2 Sam. vii. 11.

## PSALM CXIV.

THIS is perhaps the most beautiful of all the Psalms which touch on the early history of Israel. It is certainly the most graphic and the most striking in the boldness of its outlines. The following remarks may perhaps illustrate the conception and plan of the Poem.

1. In structure it is singularly perfect. This rests upon the common principle of pairs of verses, and thus we have four strophes, each consisting of two verses ; each of these verses, again, consists of two lines, in which the parallelism is carefully preserved.

2. The effect is produced, as in Psalm xxix., not by minute tracing of details, but by the boldness with which certain great features of the history are presented.

3. A singular animation and an almost dramatic force are given to the Poem by the beautiful apostrophe in ver. 5, 6, and the effect of this is heightened in a remarkable degree by the use of the present tense. The awe and the trembling of nature are a spectacle on which the Poet is looking. The parted sea through which Israel walks as on dry land, the rushing Jordan arrested in its course, the

granite cliffs of Sinai shaken to their base—he sees it all, and asks in wonder what it means.

4. Then it is that the truth bursts upon his mind, and the impression of this upon the reader is very finely managed. The name of God, which has been entirely concealed up to this point in the Poem (even the possessive pronoun being left without its substantive, “Judah was His sanctuary, Israel was His dominion”), is now only introduced after the apostrophe in verses 5, 6.

“The reason seems evident, and this conduct necessary, for if God had appeared before, there could be no wonder why the mountains should leap and the sea retire; therefore, that this convulsion of nature may be brought in with due surprise, His name is not mentioned till afterward; and then with a very agreeable turn of thought, God is introduced at once in all His majesty.”\*

We have no clue to guide us as to the age of the Psalm, or the occasion for which it was written, except that perhaps the forms in ver. 8, which are found in other late Psalms, may be taken to indicate a date after the Exile.

- 1 WHEN Israel went forth out of Egypt,  
The house of Jacob from a people of strange  
language,
- 2 Judah became His sanctuary,  
Israel His dominion.
- 3 The sea saw and fled,

1, 2. The introduction sets forth at once both the great redemptive act and also the end of the redemption, viz., that God Himself might dwell among and rule His people.

This sanctifying of the nation, as a nation to Himself, took place in the wilderness before the law was given: “Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. xix. 6).

A PEOPLE OF STRANGE LANGUAGE,

lit. “a stammering (*i.e.* an unintelligible) people.” Comp. Deut. xxviii. 49; Is. xxviii. 11, xxxiii. 19; Jer. v. 15.

2. HIS SANCTUARY. Comp. Exod. xv. 17, where the Promised Land is called “the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established.”

HIS DOMINION or kingdom: comp. Num. xxiii. 21.

3. THE SEA SAW, viz. God, whose name and whose presence are still

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\* *Spectator*, No. 461.

- Jordan was turned backwards ;  
 4 The mountain's skipped like rams,  
     The hills like young sheep.
- 5 What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleest ;  
     Thou Jordan, that thou art turned backwards ?  
 6 Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams ;  
     Ye hills, like young sheep ?
- 7 Before the Lord tremble, O earth,  
     Before God (the God of) Jacob ;  
 8 Who changed the rock into a pool of water,  
     The flint-stone into a fountain of waters.

purposely concealed. Comp. lxxvii. 16 ; xcvii. 4 ; Hab. iii. 10.

The passage of the Red Sea and of the Jordan are combined, not only as miracles of a similar character, but as marking the beginning and the end of the great deliverance—the escape from Egypt, the entrance into the Promised Land.

4. The reference is probably to the terrors which accompanied the giving of the Law on Sinai (Exod. xix. 18, “and the whole mount quaked greatly”), although these convulsions of nature form a part of every Theophany, or manifestation of God.

Comp. xviii. 7, lxxvii. 18 ; Hab. iii., Is. lxiv. 1—3. For the figure see Ps. xxix. 6.

8. THE ROCK (*tsur*), referring to the miracle in Exod. xvii. 6. THE FLINT-STONE (or perhaps “the steep cliff”).

These miracles are selected as the most striking proofs of “God’s absolute creative omnipotence, and of the grace which changes death into life.” They are, moreover, parallel miracles like the two mentioned in ver. 3. and thus the poetical effect is heightened.

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## PSALM CXV.

THIS is evidently one of the later liturgical Psalms. It was probably composed for the service of the Second Temple, whilst yet the taunts of their heathen adversaries were ringing in the ears of the

returned exiles, and whilst yet contempt for the idolatries which they had witnessed in Babylon was fresh in their hearts.

The Psalm opens with a confession of unworthiness and a prayer that God would vindicate His own honour against the scoff of the heathen. Ver. 1, 2.

It exalts Him, the Invisible, Omnipotent, absolutely Supreme Ruler of the universe, and pours contempt upon the idols and their worshipers. Ver. 3—8.

It bids all Israel, both priests and people, put their trust in Him who is alone worthy of trust, the help and shield of His people. Ver. 9—12.

It promises that Jehovah shall give His blessing to them that thus trust in Him, and calls upon them in return to give Him thanks for ever. Ver. 12—18.

Ewald's conjecture that the Psalm was intended to be sung whilst the sacrifices were offered, and that at ver. 12 the voice of the priest declares God's gracious acceptance of the sacrifice, is not improbable. He gives ver. 1—11 to the congregation, ver. 12—15 to the priest, ver. 16—18 to the congregation. But it seems more likely that the change of voices comes in at ver. 9, and that, as Tholuck supposes, in each of the verses 9, 10, 11, the first line was sung as a solo, perhaps by one of the Levites, and the second by the whole choir.

*(The Congregation.)*

1 NOT unto us, O Jehovah, not unto us,  
But unto Thy Name, give glory,  
Because of Thy loving-kindness, because of  
Thy truth.

**1. NOT UNTO US.** The repetition of the words expresses the more vividly the deep sense of unworthiness, the unfeigned humility which claims nothing for itself.

**LOVING-KINDNESS . . . TRUTH.** The two great characteristic attributes of God, even in the Old Testament; though in contrast with the Law as

given by Moses, St. John could say, *ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο*, John i. 17.

Both these attributes of God would be assailed if the taunt of the heathen should be allowed to pass unsilenced. It is God's glory which is at stake.

- 2 Wherefore should the nations say:  
 "Where now is their God?"
- 3 But our God is in the heavens;  
 He hath done whatsoever He pleased.
- 4 Their idols are silver and gold,  
 The work of men's hands.
- 5 A mouth have they, but they speak not;  
 Eyes have they, but they do not see.
- 6 They have ears, but they hear not;  
 A nose have they, but they do not smell.
- 7 They have hands, but they handle not;  
 Feet have they, but they walk not;  
 They do not utter any sound with their  
 throat.
- 8 Like unto them are they that make them,  
 Every one who putteth his trust in them.

3. BUT, or "and yet." See the same use of the conjunction in ii. 6. The answer to the taunt of the heathen, who, seeing no image of Jehovah, mocked at His existence. First, He is *in heaven*, invisible indeed, yet thence ruling the universe; next, *He doeth what He will*, in fine contrast with the utter impotence of the idols of the heathen. The last expression denotes both God's almighty power and His absolute freedom. This, truthfully accepted, does away with all *à priori* objections to miracles.

4. SILVER AND GOLD, *i.e.* however costly the material, this adds no real value to the image; it is, after all, man's workmanship. This seems to be the thought: otherwise the Psalmist would have said "wood and stone" rather than "silver and gold." This agrees also with what follows. "*Though* they may be of costly materials, they are but of hu-

man workmanship; *though* they may have the form and members of man, they are lifeless."

We have the same description of these dumb and deaf and dead gods in cxxxv. 15—18, probably borrowed from this passage. Comp. Deut. iv. 28, and the sarcastic picture in Is. xlv. 9—20.

8. LIKE UNTO THEM. So true it is, not only that as is man so is his god, but the reverse also, as is the god so is his worshiper. Comp. Is. xlv. 9, where what is elsewhere said of the idols is said of the worshipers, that they are "emptiness;" and observe the use of the verb "to become vain," 2 Kings xvii. 15; Jer. ii. 5, applied in like manner to idolaters. They who, turning away from God's witness of Himself in the visible creation, worship the creature rather than the Creator, received in themselves the sentence of their own degradation, "Their foolish heart became

(*Levites and Choir.*)

- 9 O Israel, trust in Jehovah !  
 He is their help and their shield.  
 10 O house of Aaron, trust ye in Jehovah !  
 He is their help and their shield.  
 11 Ye that fear Jehovah, trust in Jehovah !  
 He is their help and their shield.

(*The Priest.*)

- 12 Jehovah (who) hath been mindful of us will bless—  
 He will bless the house of Israel,  
 He will bless the house of Aaron.  
 13 He will bless them that fear Jehovah,  
 Both small and great.

darkened." They became blind and deaf and dumb and dead, like the idols they set up to worship.

9. The change in the strain of the Psalm here must unquestionably have been accompanied by a change in the music. And it appears highly probable, as has been said, that the first line of this and the two following verses was sung as a solo by some one of the Levites, and the second line, or refrain, which occurs in each verse, "He is their help and their shield," by the choir.

TRUST IN JEHOVAH, in contrast with the "trust" of the previous verse. Trust in Jehovah, for He is not like the idols; He is the living God, "the help and the shield" (comp. xxxiii. 20) of them that trust in Him. Trust in Jehovah, for He *hath been* mindful of us in times past, He *will* bless us in time to come (ver. 12). The threefold division, Israel—house of Aaron—they that fear Jehovah, is the same as in cxviii.

2, 3, 4. In cxxxv. 20 the house of Levi is added.

10. First the people at large are exhorted to this trust, then the priests, because to them was confided the worship of Jehovah, with them it rested to keep it pure, and they might naturally be expected to lead the people in the path of holy trust.

11. YE THAT FEAR JEHOVAH. This has been understood of proselytes of the gate, in accordance with the later Jewish and New Test. usage, as in the Acts, *σεβόμενοι τὸν Θεόν*, or simply *σεβόμενοι*. Comp. Acts xiii. 43, 50. But in other places in the Psalms the phrase occurs of all Israel; see xxii. 23, ciii. 11, 13, 17.

12. HATH BEEN MINDFUL . . . WILL BLESS. The past is the pledge of the future. Again the same three classes are mentioned as in the three preceding verses.

This blessing, thus promised (ver. 12, 13) and thus supplicated (ver. 14, 15), was sung, as Ewald conjectures,



- 14 May Jehovah increase you more and more,  
 You and your children !  
 15 Blessed be ye of Jehovah,  
 The Maker of heaven and earth.

(*The Congregation.*)

- 16 The heavens are Jehovah's heavens ;  
 But the earth He hath given to the children  
 of men.  
 17 The dead cannot praise Jah,  
 Neither all they that go down into silence ;  
 18 But *we* will bless Jah  
 From henceforth even for ever,  
 Hallelujah !

by the priest. But see Introduction to Ps. cxviii.

14. INCREASE YOU. Comp. Gen. xxx. 24 ; Deut. i. 11 ; 2 Sam. xxiv. 3.

15. MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. The title has reference to the impotent idols before described.

16. The words in this and the next verse are simple enough, but their connection with the rest of the Psalm is not very clear. Perhaps it may be traced thus : In ver. 15 Jehovah is said to have made heaven and earth. Then in ver. 16 these are distributed : heaven is His abode ; earth is the

abode of man. But the mention of heaven and earth suggests the thought of another region, that unseen world below where none can praise God as they do on this fair earth which He has given to the children of men. But what the dead cannot do, *we* will do,—we to whom our God has given the earth, we to whom He has been a help and a shield, we whom He has blessed and will bless, we with thankful hearts will never cease to show forth His praise.

17. Comp. cxviii. 17 ; Is. xxxviii. 18, 19.

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## PSALM CXVI.

IN this Psalm one who has been in peril of death (ver. 3, 9, 15) gives thanks to God with a full heart for the deliverance which has been vouchsafed to him. Beginning with the expression of a love to

God called forth by His mercy, the Psalmist then passes in review all God's goodness, till he feels that it surpasses infinitely not only all his deserts, but all adequate power of acknowledgement (ver. 12); and he concludes by declaring that in the most public manner, before the assembled congregation, he will confess how great the debt he owes, and bind himself solemnly to the service of Jehovah.

The Psalm is evidence of the truth and depth of the religious life in individuals after the return from the Exile; for there can be little doubt that it must be assigned to that period. Many words and turns of phrases remind us of earlier Psalms, and especially of the Psalms of David. His words must have laid hold in no common degree of the hearts of those who were heirs of his faith, and have sustained them in times of sorrow and suffering, and nothing would be more natural than that later Poets should echo his strains, and mingle his words with their own when they poured forth their prayers and praises before God.

- 1 I LOVE (Him) because Jehovah heareth  
My voice (and) my supplications,
- 2 Because He hath inclined His ear unto me,  
Therefore as long as I live will I call (upon Him).
- 3 The cords of Death compassed me,  
And the pains of the unseen world gat hold upon me.  
Distress and sorrow did I find :
- 4 Then I called upon the name of Jehovah,  
"O Jehovah, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul."
- 5 Gracious is Jehovah and righteous ;

1. I LOVE. The verb stands alone without any expressed object, as if the full heart needed not to express it. The object appears as subject in the next clause, from which it is readily supplied: "I love Jehovah, for He heareth," &c. The writer is fond of this pregnant use of the verb without an object expressed. See ver. 2, "I call," and ver. 10, "I believe." For the sentiment, comp. xviii. 1, "Tenderly do I love Thee."

2. AS LONG AS I LIVE, lit. "in my days."

3. The later Psalmists would naturally often use David's words as the best expression of their own feelings, especially in seasons of peril and sorrow. See xviii. 1—6.

5. Instead of saying directly, "Jehovah answered me," he magnifies those attributes of God which, from the days of His wonderful self-revelation to Moses (Ex. xxxiv. 6), had

- Yea, our God sheweth tender compassion.  
 6 Jehovah keepeth the simple :  
     I was in misery and He helped me:  
 7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul,  
     For Jehovah hath dealt bountifully with thee.  
 8 For Thou hast delivered my soul from death,  
     Mine eye from tears,  
     My foot from stumbling.  
 9 I will walk before Jehovah  
     In the land of the living.  
 10 I believe (in Him) ;—for I must speak :  
     I was greatly afflicted.  
 11 I said in my confusion,  
     “All men are liars.”
- 12 How shall I repay to Jehovah  
     All His benefits unto me ?

been the joy and consolation of every tried and trusting heart. See Introduction to ciii. The epithet “righteous” is added here, as in cxii. 4.

6. THE SIMPLE. The very simplicity which lays them most readily open to attack is itself an appeal for protection to Him who “showeth tender compassion.”

7. The deliverance vouchsafed in answer to prayer stills the tumult of the soul. The REST is the rest of confidence in God.

10. The E. V., “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” follows the LXX., ἐπίστευσα, διὸ ἐλάλησα, a rendering which is also adopted by St. Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 13, in illustration of the truth that a living faith in the heart will utter its convictions with the mouth. But the Hebrew will not admit of such a rendering. The following are possible interpretations: (1) “I believe when I speak,” *i.e.* when I break forth into the con-

plaint which follows in the next clause. Or (2), “I believe”—emphatic, *i.e.* I do believe, I have learnt trust in God by painful experience—“for I must speak”—I must confess it, “I, even I (pron. emphatic), was greatly afflicted; I myself (pron. emphatic, as before) said,” &c. The latter explanation seems, on the whole, preferable, as it gives the due prominence to the repeated pronoun, and moreover a satisfactory sense is obtained. The Psalmist declares that he *stays himself* upon God (“I believe”), for he had looked to himself, and there had seen nothing but weakness; he had looked to other men and found them all deceitful, treacherous as a broken reed. Comp. lx 11, lxii. 9, cxviii. 8, 9. There is an allusion to this passage in Rom. iii. 4.

11. The first member is the same as in xxxi. 22.

- 13 I will take the cup of salvation,  
And call on the Name of Jehovah.
- 14 My vows unto Jehovah will I pay,  
Yea, in the presence of all His people let me (pay them).
- 15 Precious in the sight of Jehovah  
Is the death of His beloved.
- 16 I beseech Thee, O Jehovah—for I am Thy servant,  
I am Thy servant, the son of Thine handmaid ;  
Thou hast loosed my bonds.
- 17 I will sacrifice unto Thee the sacrifice of thanks-  
giving,  
And I will call upon the Name of Jehovah.
- 18 My vows will I pay unto Jehovah,  
Yea, in the presence of all His people let me (pay them),
- 19 In the courts of Jehovah's house,  
In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem !  
Hallelujah !

13. THE CUP. Many see in the word an allusion to the "cup of blessing" at the Paschal meal (Matt. xxvi. 27), and this would accord with the sacrificial language of ver. 14, 17. It is true there is no evidence of any such custom at the celebration of the Passover in the Old Test. ; but as the custom existed in our Lord's time, the only question is as to the *time* of its introduction. If it was introduced shortly after the Exile, this Psalm may very well allude to it. Others understand by "the cup," in a figurative sense, the portion allotted to man, whether of prosperity, as in xvi. 5, xxiii. 5 ; or of adversity, as in xi. 6, lxxv. 8. So the Arabs speak of "the cup of death," "the cup of love," &c. Then the meaning of the verse will be, "I will accept thank-

fully and with devout acknowledgement the blessings which God gives me as my portion."

14. LET ME (PAY THEM). I have endeavoured thus to render here, and in ver. 18 (the refrain), the interjection which is used in beseeching. It is a part of the same interjection which occurs in ver. 4 and 16, and which is there rendered, "I beseech Thee." A fondness for these forms is characteristic of the Psalm.

15. PRECIOUS . . . IS THE DEATH, *i.e.* it is no light thing in the sight of God that His servant should perish. The more obvious form of expression occurs in lxxii. 14, "precious is their blood in His eyes."

16. SON OF THINE HANDMAID. Comp. lxxxvi. 16 ; 2 Tim. i. 5.

## PSALM CXVII.

THIS short Psalm may have been a doxology intended to be sung after other Psalms, or perhaps at the beginning or end of the Temple service. In many MSS. and editions it is joined with the following Psalm, but without any sufficient reason.

- 1 O PRAISE Jehovah, all ye nations,  
Laud Him, all ye peoples!
- 2 For His loving-kindness is mightily shown towards us,  
And the truth of Jehovah is for ever.  
Hallelujah!

2. LOVING-KINDNESS . . . TRUTH.  
These two great attributes of God (see on cxv. 1), as manifested to Israel, "*towards us*," are to be the subject of praise for the heathen, an indication of those wider sympathies which appear to have manifested themselves after the Exile. Hence the first verse is quoted by St. Paul,

Rom. xv. 10, 11, together with Deut. xxxii. 43, "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people," as showing that in the purpose of God the Gentiles were destined to be partakers, together with the Jews, of His mercy in Christ.

IS MIGHTILY SHOWN. Comp. ciii. 11.

## PSALM CXVIII.

IT is evident that this Psalm was designed to be sung in the Temple worship, and was composed for some festal occasion. Its liturgical character is shown by the formula with which it opens and closes, "O give thanks to Jehovah," &c.; by the introduction of

different voices, which may be inferred in ver. 2—4; and by the frequent repetition of certain lines as a refrain in the former half of the Psalm, which can leave little doubt that it was constructed with a view to antiphonal singing. The allusions in the latter part, and especially ver. 24, "This is the day which Jehovah hath made," &c. point to some great festival as the occasion for which it was written. Its general character, and the many passages in it borrowed from earlier writers, render it probable that it is one of the later Psalms, and we may assume that it was composed after the return from the Captivity.

Four different occasions have been suggested for which it might have been written :—

1. The first celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month of the first year of the Return, when nothing but the altar had, as yet, been erected for the worship of God, Ezra iii. 1—4. (Ewald.)

2. The laying of the foundation-stone of the Second Temple in the second month of the second year, Ezra iii. 8—13. (Hengstenberg.)

3. The completion and consecration of the Temple in the twelfth month of the seventh year of Darius, Ezra vi. 15—18. (Delitzsch.)

4. The extraordinary celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles after the completion of the Second Temple, recorded in Neh. viii. 13—18. (Stier.)

The following considerations may help us to decide :—

1. The use of the Psalm in the Ritual of the Second Temple leads to the conclusion that it was composed originally for the Feast of Tabernacles. For the words of the 25th verse were sung during that Feast, when the altar of burnt-offering was solemnly compassed; that is, once on each of the first six days of the Feast, and seven times on the seventh day. This seventh day was called "the great *Hosannah*" (*Save now*, ver. 25); and not only the prayers for the Feast, but even the branches of trees, including the myrtles which were attached to the palm-branch (*Lulab*), were called "Hosannas." Further, although the Psalm itself contains no direct allusion to any of the national Feasts, yet the use of the word "tents" in ver. 15 at least accords very well with the Feast of Tabernacles.

2. In the next place, it seems equally clear that the Psalm supposes the completion of the Temple. The language of verses 19, 20, "Open

me the gates of righteousness," "This is the gate of Jehovah," and the figure employed in ver. 22, "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner," cannot be easily explained on any other supposition. The allusions in verses 8—12 to the deceitfulness of human help and the favour of princes, as well as to the active interference of troublesome enemies, are exactly in accordance with all that we read of the circumstances connected with the rebuilding of the Temple. The most probable conclusion therefore is, that the Psalm was composed for the first celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, after the completion of the Second Temple. (Nehemiah viii.)

The congregation speak of themselves sometimes in the singular, sometimes in the plural, but it is not necessary to assume that in the former case the words were sung by a single voice, and in the latter by many. It is more probable that in some portions of the Psalm, although it was intended for public worship, the personal feelings of the writer were uppermost. There is the same change, for instance, in the "Te Deum," and such variations are perfectly natural.

- 1 O GIVE thanks to Jehovah, for He is good,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 2 Let Israel now say,  
That His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 3 Let the house of Aaron now say,  
That His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 4 Let them now that fear Jehovah say,  
That His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 5 Out of (my) straitness I cried unto Jah,  
Jah answered me (and set me) in a large place.
- 6 Jehovah is on my side, I am not afraid ;  
What can man do unto me ?

I—4. Comp. Ezra iii. 11, where the same refrain is found as the burden of the psalmody which was sung at the laying of the foundations of the Second Temple. This is so far

in favour of Hengstenberg's view as to the occasion on which the Psalm was first sung. See Introduction to the Psalm.

6. Borrowed from lvi. 9, 11.

- 7 Jehovah is on my side, to help me,  
Therefore I shall see my desire upon them that hate  
me.
- 8 It is better to find refuge in Jehovah  
Than to put any trust in man :
- 9 It is better to find refuge in Jehovah  
Than to put any trust in princes.
- 10 All nations compassed me about,  
But in the name of Jehovah will I cut them off.
- 11 They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me  
about,  
But in the name of Jehovah will I cut them off.
- 12 They compassed me about like bees,  
They were extinguished like a fire of thorns :  
In the name of Jehovah will I cut them off.
- 13 Thou didst thrust sore at me, that I might fall,  
But Jehovah helped me.
- 14 Jah is my strength and my song,  
And He is become my salvation.

7. TO HELP ME, or "as my Helper." Comp. liv. 4.

8, 9. See lxii., xxxiii. 16—19, and comp. cxlvi. 3.

The allusion is probably to the hostility of the Samaritans and the Persian satraps during the building of the Temple. The Jews had learnt by painful experience how little they could trust in princes, for the work which had been begun under Cyrus had been threatened under Cambyeses, and had been suspended under the pseudo-Smerdis, and it was not till Darius came to the throne that they were allowed to resume it (Ezra iv.).

10. ALL NATIONS, *i.e.* the neighbouring tribes, who harassed the returning exiles, the four times repeated "compassed me about"

marking their close and pertinacious hostility.

12. LIKE BEES. See the same figure Deut. i. 44.

FIRE OF THORNS, quickly blazing up and as quickly dying out. Comp. lviii. 9.

13. THOU DIDST THRUST SORE, or perhaps, "Thou didst *indeed* thrust, &c. . . . *but*," for the emphasis in the repetition of the verb belongs, not merely to the idea contained in the verb, but rather to the whole sentence, and implies an opposition, as here in what follows. The words are an apostrophe to the enemy, here addressed as an individual.

14. In the first line there is a reminiscence of Israel's song of triumph at the Red Sea, Ex. xv. 2 (comp. Is. xii. 2).



- 15 The voice of joyous song and salvation  
 Is in the tents of the righteous :  
 The right hand of Jehovah doeth valiantly.
- 16 The right hand of Jehovah is exalted,  
 The right hand of Jehovah doeth valiantly.
- 17 I shall not die, but live,  
 And I shall tell forth the works of Jah.
- 18 Jehovah hath chastened me sore,  
 But He hath not given me over unto death.
- 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
 I will go into them, I will give thanks to Jah.
- 20 This is the gate of Jehovah,  
 The righteous shall enter into it.

15. TENTS, or "tabernacles." "We can imagine with what special force the words [of this verse] would come to those who then were, or had but recently been, keeping their Feast of Tabernacles, dwelling in the temporary huts which they constructed of the branches of the olive and the fig-tree, the myrtle and the palm, and rejoicing in the great deliverance which God had given them."—PLUMPTRE, *Biblical Studies*, pp. 274, 275.

17. The personal feeling of the Psalmist seems here to predominate, though the Psalm is so manifestly liturgical, and therefore intended to represent the feelings of the congregation, that the personal experience includes that of the nation at large. Each one of those redeemed captives may take up the words and utter them as his own, and the whole nation as one man may adopt them also. Nationally and individually they are alike true.

19. THE GATES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. The gates of the Temple are so called with reference to the service of God, and the character He

requires of His worshipers. This is evident from the next verse, "*The righteous shall enter into it.*" Comp. v. 4, "Evil cannot dwell with Thee," i.e. in Thy house; xv. 1, 2, "Who may dwell on Thy holy mountain? He that walketh perfectly and worketh righteousness," &c. See also xxiv. 3—6. What David had declared to be the necessary condition of all acceptable worship in the first Temple was felt to be true also of the second.

The demand "Open to me" may be understood either (1) literally, in which case it is best explained as the words of the singers in the festal procession when they reach the Temple gates (see Introduction to the Psalm); or (2) figuratively, as implying the readiness and alacrity with which the Psalmist will go to the house of God, there to offer his sacrifices and to utter his thanksgivings. Comp. Is. xxvi. 2, "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation may enter in," where righteousness is made the condition of entrance into "the strong city" of God's building, as here into the holy place.

- 21 I will give thanks unto Thee, for Thou hast answered  
me,  
And art become my salvation.  
22 A stone which the builders rejected  
Is become the head (stone) of the corner.

22. A STONE. The imagery is drawn obviously from the building of the Temple. "Some incident in the progress of the works had probably served as the starting-point of the parable. Some stone—a fragment, we may conjecture, of the Old Temple, rescued from its ruins—had seemed to the architects unfit for the work of binding together the two walls that met at right angles to each other. They would have preferred some new block of their own fashioning. But the priests, it may be, more conversant with the traditions of the Temple, knew that that was the right place for it, and that no other stone would answer half as well. The trial was made, and the issue answered their expectations. Could they fail to see that this was a type and figure of what was then passing in the history of their nation? Israel had been rejected by the builders of this world's empires, and seemed now about to be once more 'the head of the corner.'" (*Biblical Studies*, p. 275.) They had been despised by their heathen masters, but now, by the good hand of their God upon them, they had been lifted into a place of honour. They, rejected of men, were chosen of God as a chief stone of that new spiritual building which Jehovah was about to erect; that temple of the world, the foundation of which was to be laid in Zion. In Matt. xxi. 42—44 (Mark xii. 10, 11; Luke, xx. 17), our Lord applies the words of this and the next verse to Himself. The quotation was, it would seem, purposely taken from the same Psalm from

which the multitude had just before taken their words of salutation (see on ver. 25, 26), as they went forth to meet Him and conduct Him in triumph into Jerusalem. But there is more than an application of the words. Israel is not only a figure of Christ, there is an organic unity between Him and them. Whatever, therefore, is true of Israel in a lower sense, is true in its highest sense of Christ. Is Israel God's "first-born son"? the name in its fulfilment belongs to Christ (Matt. ii. 15); if Israel is "the servant of Jehovah," he is so only as imperfectly representing Him who said, "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work." If Israel is the rejected stone made the head of the corner, this is far truer of Him who was indeed rejected of men, but chosen of God and precious; the corner-stone of the one great living temple of the redeemed, whether Jews or Gentiles. (Comp. Eph. ii. 20.) See the use of the same figure in its application to our Lord by St. Peter, Acts iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 7.

The passage which forms the connecting link between this Psalm and the N. T. quotations is Isaiah xxviii. 16, "Behold, it is I who have laid securely in Zion a stone, a tried precious corner-stone, most securely laid: he that believeth (i.e. *resteth thereon*) shall not flee (through fear of any evil)." In this passage the Messianic reference is still more direct, even if we suppose a primary reference to the house of David. (It is interpreted as Messianic both by the Targum and, amongst the Rabbi-

- 23 This is Jehovah's doing,  
It is marvellous in our eyes.  
24 This is the day which Jehovah hath made,  
Let us exult and be glad in it.  
25 I beseech Thee, O Jehovah, save now,  
I beseech Thee, O Jehovah, send now prosperity.  
26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah,  
We have blessed you from the house of Jehovah.  
27 Jehovah is God, and showeth us light ;  
Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns  
of the altar.

nical commentators, by Rashi.) In marked contrast with this, it is said of Babylon, Jer. li. 26, "They shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for a foundation."

23. This change in Israel's destiny, the restoration to their land, the rebuilding of their Temple, the future that was opening before them—these things are a miracle ; Jehovah's hand alone could have accomplished it.

24. THIS IS THE DAY, *i.e.* perhaps the great day of festival with reference to which the Psalm was composed. It is possible, however, that this verse is rather to be connected with the previous verse, so that "the day" is not the Feast-day, but the day (the time) on which Jehovah had wrought for Israel : "This is Jehovah's doing . . . this is the day which He hath made." The prayer of the next verse falls in best with the latter interpretation.

25. I BESEECH THEE. Comp. cxvi. 4, 16.

SAVE NOW, or rather, "Save, I pray" (*Hosanna*). The particle of entreaty is repeated in each member of this verse, so that altogether it occurs four times, as if to mark the earnestness of the petition. The English word "now" is not, therefore, a

particle of time, but a particle of entreaty, as in Eccl. xii. 1, "Remember now thy Creator," *i.e.* "Remember, I beseech thee, thy Creator."

With this word "Hosanna," and words from the next verse, "Blessed be He that cometh," &c., the multitude welcomed Jesus as the Messiah, the Psalm being perhaps already recognised as a Messianic Psalm. According to the Midrash, in the words of ver. 26 the people of Jerusalem welcome the caravans of pilgrims coming up to the feast.

26. According to the accents the rendering would be "Blessed in the name of Jehovah be He that cometh," the formula being the same as in the priestly blessing, Num. vi. 24 ; Deut. xxi. 5 ; 2 Sam. vi. 18. Comp. Ps. cxvix. 8.

FROM THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH, the priests standing there to bless those who entered.

27. SHOWETH US LIGHT, in allusion to the priestly blessing, "Jehovah make His face *shine* (lighten, the same verb as here) upon thee." Comp. iv. 6.

THE SACRIFICE. The word commonly denotes *the fact* ; here, as in Ex. xxiii. 18, *the victim* offered at the feast.

- 28 Thou art my God, and I will give Thee thanks,  
 (Thou art) my God, and I will exalt Thee.  
 29 O give thanks to Jehovah, for He is good,  
 For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.

UNTO THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR.  
 The expression is apparently a pregnant one, and the sense is, "Bind the victim with cords till it is sacrificed, and its blood sprinkled on the horns of the altar."

Luther has "Deck the feast with

garlands (or boughs)," following the LXX. *συστήσασθε ἑορτήν ἐν τοῖς πυκάζουσιν*. As regards this rendering, the word translated in the text *cords* may mean *thick boughs*, *πυκάσματα* (see Ezek. xix. 11; xxxi. 3, 4), but the verb cannot mean *deck* or *wreath*.

## PSALM CXIX.

THIS is the longest and the most elaborate of the Alphabetical Psalms. It is arranged in twenty-two stanzas, according to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Each stanza is composed of eight verses, each verse consisting of two members only, and each beginning with the same letter of the alphabet. Thus each of the first eight verses begins with the letter Aleph, each of the next eight with the letter Beth, and so on throughout the alphabet. In the third chapter of the Lamentations of Jeremiah a similar arrangement is adopted, but there the stanzas or groups consist only of three verses, each beginning with the same letter. Other instances of this acrostic arrangement occurring in the Psalter will be found enumerated in the Introduction to Psalm xxv. (See also the Introduction to Psalm cxi.)

The great subject of the Psalmist's praise is the Law of God. In this respect the Psalm may be said to be an elaborate expansion of the latter part of Psalm xix. The Masoretes observe, that in every verse but one, the 122nd, there is direct reference to the Law under some one of the ten names (supposed to allude to the Ten Command-

ments), *word, saying, testimonies, way, judgement, precept, commandment, law, statute, faithfulness* (or according to another reading, *righteousness*). They ought, however, to have excepted also the 132nd verse. In ver. 121, "judgement and righteousness," if not denoting the Law immediately, are employed with reference to the requirements of the Law.

The date of the Psalm cannot be fixed with anything like certainty, though it may probably be referred to a time subsequent to the return from the Babylonish captivity.

(a) The allusions to "princes" (ver. 23) and "kings" (ver. 46) who did not share the faith of the Psalmist, may be taken to denote that the Jews were subject at this time to foreign dominion.

(b) The Law of which he speaks as his daily study, as his delight and his counsellor, must obviously have been the written Law, and it may be inferred that it was now in the hands of the people. Whether this was the case to any extent before the Exile, we have now no means of ascertaining. After the Exile, copies of the Scriptures were multiplied. The efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah, which were directed in the first instance to the collection of the Sacred Books (2 Macc. ii. 13), must have been directed eventually to their dissemination. Accordingly, we find that copies of "the books of the Law," or of "the book of the Covenant," were in the possession of the people at the time of the Maccabees (1 Macc. i. 55, 56). In the Psalm the writer perhaps includes in "the word" of God, not only the Law, but other writings regarded as sacred. In Zech. vii. 12, "the former Prophets" seem to be placed on a level with "the Law."

(c) The general character of the Psalm, which is a meditation rather than a poem, as well as its place in the Collection, favours the supposition that it is one of the later Psalms.

(d) The alphabetical arrangement, it has also been argued, forbids our assigning it to an earlier period: "adapted for didactic rather than for lyric expression, it belongs," it has been said, "to an age no longer animated by the soul of poetry, but struggling to clothe its religious thoughts in a poetic form."\* It is, however, far from certain that this acrostic device is of itself evidence of the decline of the poetic spirit. Some of the oldest poems in our own language are constructed on the principle of alliteration. It is the same in Welsh poetry. And unless the different stages of Hebrew poetry were more

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\* The Psalms Chronologically Arranged, by Four Friends, p. 383.

clearly marked than they are at present, its acrostic character can hardly be taken as settling the question of the date of any single Psalm.

The circumstances of the Psalmist may be inferred in some measure from the language of the Psalm itself. He is suffering from persecution. His enemies are men of rank and authority (ver. 21, 23), having both the power and the will to crush him (ver. 61, 69). His constancy is severely tried. He is exposed to reproach and contempt on account of his religion, and has reason to fear lest his hope and trust in God should be put to shame (ver. 6, 22, 31). He is solicited to give up his faith for gain, and even perhaps invited to join in idolatrous worship (ver. 36, 37). These things make him sad (ver. 25, 28), but he stays himself upon the word and promise of God. That word in all its varied aspects of law and promise, of precepts and judgements, had been his comfort in his affliction, his most precious possession, dearer to him than all earthly treasures; he had meditated upon it day and night; it had been a lamp to his feet and a light to his path. He had taken it for his rule of life, he longed to know it better, he prayed to have the veil taken off his eyes that he might behold its hidden wonders. These thoughts, and thoughts like these, recur again and again. He is never wearied of declaring his love of God's Law, or of praying for more light to understand it, more power to keep it, to keep it with his "whole heart." (The frequency of this last expression is striking evidence of the earnestness of the writer: see on ver. 2.) But there does not seem to be anything like continuity, or progress of thought, or of recorded experience, in the several stanzas of the Psalm.

Still, "if we would fathom the depth of meaning in the written Law of Israel, if we would measure the elevation of soul, the hope, the confidence even before princes and kings, which pious Jews derived from it, we must turn to this Psalm. Here is an epitome of all true religion, as conceived by the best spirits of that time. To such a loving study and meditation on the Law the alphabetical arrangement is not inappropriate; and if the Poem be necessarily somewhat cramped, it is nevertheless pervaded by the glow of love, and abounds in spiritual life."

Delitzsch thinks that the Psalm must have been written by a young man, and appeals to ver. 9, and ver. 99, 100, as supporting this view. But the language of ver. 9 is rather that of one who, looking back on his own past life, draws the inference which he seeks to impress

upon the young, that youthful purity can only be preserved by those who from their early years take God's word for their guide. Just so in Ecclesiastes xii. 1, it is the man of mature age and large experience who gives the wise and friendly counsel, "Remember, I beseech thee, thy Creator in the days of thy youth." The lesson in each case comes with double force, because it comes from the lips of one who speaks with the authority of experience. When it is said in verses 99, 100 of this Psalm, that the Psalmist is wiser than his teachers, wiser than the aged, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that he is not advanced in life. It is plain that the writer is not an old man, or he would not compare his knowledge of the Law with the knowledge of the aged. But it does not follow that he is a young man. The teachers whom he has outstript may have been those whose disciple he once was, not those whose disciple he still is; or he may refer to authorized teachers, to whom he listened because they sat in Moses' seat, though he felt that they had really nothing to teach him. Indeed, the whole strain of the Psalm, its depth and breadth of spiritual life, and the long acquaintance which is everywhere implied in it with the word of God, can leave us in no doubt that it was written by a man who was no longer young, who had at least reached "the middle arch of life."

*Alcph.*

- 1 BLESSED are the perfect in the way,  
Who walk in the law of Jehovah.
- 2 Blessed are they that keep His testimonies,  
That seek Him with the whole heart,
- 3 Who also have done no iniquity,  
Who have walked in His ways.
- 4 Thou hast enjoined Thy precepts,  
That (we) should keep (them) diligently.
- 5 O that my ways were established  
To keep Thy statutes.
- 6 Then shall I not be ashamed,

2. WITH THE WHOLE HEART.  
An expression characteristic of this Psalm. Comp. ver. 10, 34, 58, 69, 145.

6. ASHAMED, *i.e.* put to shame, my hope being frustrated. This is the shame meant, not shame of con-

- When I have respect unto all Thy commandments.  
 7 I will give thanks to Thee with uprightness of  
     heart,  
 When I learn Thy righteous judgements.  
 8 I will keep Thy statutes :  
     O forsake me not utterly.

*Beth.*

- 9 Wherewithal shall a young man keep his path pure ?  
     By taking heed (thereto) according to Thy word.  
 10 With my whole heart have I sought Thee :  
     O let me not wander from Thy commandments.  
 11 In my heart have I hid Thy word,  
     That I might not sin against Thee.  
 12 Blessed art Thou, O Jehovah :  
     Teach me Thy statutes.  
 13 With my lips have I told  
     Of all the judgements of Thy mouth.  
 14 In the way of Thy testimonies I have rejoiced,  
     As much as in all manner of riches.  
 15 I will meditate in Thy precepts,  
     And have respect unto Thy paths.  
 16 In Thy statutes will I delight myself ;  
     I will not forget Thy word.

science in comparing a man's life with the requirements of the Law.

HAVE RESPECT UNTO, lit. "look upon," *i.e.* with care and thought, so as to make them the rule of life.

7. JUDGEMENTS; here and throughout this Psalm not used of God's acts of judgement, but merely as the equivalent of "law," "precepts," and the like, utterances as of a Judge and Lawgiver, and found in this sense even in the Pentateuch, Ex. xxi. 1, xxiv. 3; Lev. xviii. 4, 5.

11. IN MY HEART. It is to me no merely outward rule of conduct: it is a power and a life within.

WORD, or rather "saying," "speech," distinct from the word employed, for instance, in ver. 9. Both words are constantly interchanged throughout the Psalm.

14. ALL MANNER OF RICHES. Comp. what is said of the incomparable worth of wisdom, Prov. ii. 4, iii. 13—15, viii. 10, 11, 19, xvi. 16, xxii. 1; Job xxviii. 15—19.



*Gimel.*

- 17 Deal bountifully with Thy servant that I may live,  
And so will I keep Thy word.
- 18 Open Thou mine eyes,  
That I may behold wondrous Things out of Thy  
law.
- 19 I am a sojourner in the earth :  
Hide not Thy commandments from me.
- 20 My soul breaketh for (the) longing  
(That it hath) unto Thy judgements at all times.
- 21 Thou hast rebuked the proud that they are cursed,  
Which do wander from Thy commandments.
- 22 Remove from me reproach and contempt ;  
For I have kept Thy testimonies.
- 23 Princes also have sat and spoken one with another  
against me,  
But Thy servant meditateth in Thy statutes.
- 24 Thy testimonies also are my delight,  
And my counsellors.

*Daleth.*

- 25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust ;

17. THAT I MAY LIVE ; or the construction may be, "Let me live (or, if I live), so will I," &c. The gift of life, if vouchsafed, shall be devoted to the keeping of God's word.

18. WONDROUS THINGS ; an acknowledgement of treasures in the Divine word not seen by common eyes, needing, indeed, spiritual discernment, and heavenly unveiling : hence "Open *Thou*."

19. A SOJOURNER, here therefore but for a short time (see on xxxix. 12), and needing for that time Divine teaching. Hence the prayer "Hide not," *i.e.* reveal, show me the inner sense and true application of "Thy commandments."

20. BREAKETH, lit. "is broken," as expressive of the intensity of the desire, which seems to pervade the whole man, and leave him crushed and powerless in its grasp. Bishop Taylor speaks somewhere of "the violence of the desire, bursting itself with its fulness into dissolution."

21. THAT THEY ARE CURSED. The adjective is a predicate marking the effect of God's rebuke.

22. REMOVE FROM ME, lit. "take off from me," shame being regarded as a cloak or mantle covering the person.

25. CLEAVETH UNTO THE DUST. See on xlv. 25.

- Quicken Thou me according to Thy word.  
 26 I have told my ways, and Thou heardest me ;  
 Teach me Thy statutes.  
 27 Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts,  
 So shall I meditate of Thy wondrous works.  
 28 My soul melteth for heaviness ;  
 Stablish Thou me according unto Thy word.  
 29 Remove from me the way of lying,  
 And with Thy law be gracious unto me.  
 30 I have chosen the way of faithfulness ;  
 Thy judgements have I laid (before me).  
 31 I have stuck unto Thy testimonies :  
 O Jehovah, put me not to shame.  
 32 I will run the way of Thy commandments,  
 When Thou shalt enlarge my heart.

*He.*

- 33 Teach me, O Jehovah, the way of Thy statutes,  
 And I shall keep it unto the end.  
 34 Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law,  
 That I may keep it with my whole heart.  
 35 Make me to walk in the path of Thy commandments ;  
 For therein do I delight.  
 36 Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies,

26. I HAVE TOLD MY WAYS. I have laid before Thee severally, numbering them as it were, all the acts and events of my life.

28. MELTETH, lit. "droppeth," weeps itself away, so to speak.

STABLISH, lit. "set me up again," the meaning being nearly the same as in the often-repeated prayer, "quicken me."

Word. See on ver. II.

29. THE WAY OF LYING, *i.e.* not falsehood in the common sense of

the term, but "unfaithfulness" to God, to which, in the next verse, "the way of faithfulness" is opposed.

WITH THY LAW, or "Graciously impart Thy law unto me."

32. ENLARGE MY HEART, *i.e.* expand it with a sense of liberty and joy, as in Is. lx. 5 ; 2 Cor. vi. 11, 13. See on ci. 6.

36. MY HEART, to which answers in the next verse "mine eyes," as representing the senses through which the forbidden desire is kindled in the

And not to covetousness.

- 37 Turn away mine eyes from seeing vanity  
In Thy way quicken Thou me.  
38 Stablish Thy promise unto Thy servant,  
Who is (devoted) to Thy fear.  
39 Turn away my reproach which I fear,  
For Thy judgements are good.  
40 Behold, I have longed after Thy precepts :  
In Thy righteousness quicken Thou me.

*Vau.*

- 41 Let Thy loving-kindness also come unto me, O  
Jehovah,  
Thy salvation according to Thy promise.  
42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that re-  
proacheth me ;  
For I trust in Thy word.  
43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my  
mouth ;  
For I have waited for Thy judgements.  
44 So shall I keep Thy law continually,  
(Yea) for ever and ever.  
45 And I shall walk at liberty ;

heart. Comp. Is. xxxiii. 15 ; Job xxxi. 1, 7.

COVETOUSNESS, or rather, "gain unjustly acquired."

37. TURN AWAY, lit. "make to pass on one side" of the object.

FROM SEEING, *i.e.* being attracted by, and finding pleasure in (Is. xxxiii. 15) VANITY, all which, as being against God, or without God, is unreal and unstable : but perhaps *idols* are especially meant.

38. The second member of the ver. might also be rendered : "Which (promise) is for Thy fear," *i.e.* either (*a*) is given to them that fear Thee ; (*b*), which has the fear of Thee for

its aim and object (cxxx. 4), tends to cherish a holy fear.

39. The train of thought seems to be : Keep me from the reproach of breaking Thy commandments, for those commandments are not grievous, but good, sweet, and full of blessing to one who longs after them as I do. Or "the reproach" may be that of his enemies (ver. 42), who taunt him as the servant of God.

43. The sense seems to be, "Give me the power faithfully to witness for Thy truth, and so to answer him that reproacheth me" (ver. 42).

45. AT LIBERTY, lit. "in a wide space," where there is nothing to

For I have sought Thy precepts.

46 And I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings,  
And not be ashamed.

47 And I will delight myself in Thy commandments,  
Which I love.

48 My hands also will I lift up unto Thy commandments,  
which I love ;  
And I will meditate in Thy statutes.

*Zain.*

49 Remember the word unto Thy servant,  
Upon which Thou hast caused me to hope.

50 This is my comfort in my affliction,  
For Thy word hath quickened me.

51 (The) proud have had me greatly in derision ;  
(Yet) have I not swerved from Thy law.

52 I remember Thy judgements of old, O Jehovah,

check or hinder freedom of action, as in cxviii. 5.

46. BEFORE KINGS. It may be inferred that the Psalm was written whilst Judæa was in subjection to foreign rule. The viceroys of the Persian king may be meant.

48. MY HANDS WILL I LIFT UP. The expression denotes the act of prayer, as in xxviii. 2, lxiii. 4, cxxxiv. 2, cxli. 2. Comp. Lam. iii. 41, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands." Here it would seem to denote figuratively reverence, devotion of heart, and the like ; unless we suppose it to be a *locutio prægans*—"I will pray to Thee for grace to keep Thy commandments."

49. THE WORD, apparently some special word of promise which had been his stay in his affliction, and had roused him to new hope and courage (ver. 50).

50. MY COMFORT. Comp. Job

vi. 10, the only other place where the word occurs. It is the "word" (ver. 49) which is his comfort. Others render the ver. "This is my comfort, &c. . . . that Thy word hath quickened me."

FOR THY WORD. Here, as is evident from the mention of "affliction"—and indeed throughout the Psalm—the verb "quicken" is used not merely in an external sense of "preservation from death," but of "reviving the heart," "imparting fresh courage," &c.

51. HAVE HAD ME IN DERISION, *i.e.* probably both on account of his misery and his trust in God. The verb is from the same root as the noun "scorners," "mockers," in i. 1. Comp. for the same connection between the spirit of *pride* and the spirit of *irreligious scoffing*, Prov. xxi. 24.

52. JUDGEMENTS, in the same sense as throughout the Psalm, God's

And have comforted myself.

- 53 Burning indignation hath taken hold upon me,  
Because of the wicked that forsake Thy law.  
54 Thy statutes have been my songs  
In the house of my pilgrimage.  
55 I have remembered Thy name in the night, O Jehovah,  
And have kept Thy law.  
56 This I had,  
Because I kept Thy precepts.

*Cheth.*

- 57 "Jehovah is my portion,"  
I said, that I might keep Thy words.  
58 I entreated Thy favour with (my) whole heart ;  
Be gracious to me according to Thy promise.  
59 I thought on my ways,  
And turned back my feet unto Thy testimonies.  
60 I made haste, and delayed not  
To keep Thy commandments.  
61 The cords of the wicked have been wound about  
me,  
But Thy law have I not forgotten.  
62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee,  
Because of Thy righteous judgements.  
63 I am a companion of them that fear Thee,  
And of them that keep Thy precepts.  
64 The earth, O Jehovah, is full of Thy loving-kindness :  
Teach me Thy statutes.

righteous laws which He revealed OF OLD, which are ever true and ever in force.

54. PILGRIMAGE, or rather "so-journing." In this earth I am but a passing guest, as at some wayside inn. Comp. Gen. xlvii. 9.

56. THIS I HAD. It is not clear

to what "this" refers. If to what goes before, it may be to the remembrance of God's Name. Otherwise we must render: "This has been (vouchsafed) to me, *that* I have kept Thy statutes," *i.e.* such has been the gift of Thy grace.

*Teth.*

- 65 Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant,  
O Jehovah, according unto Thy word.
- 66 Teach me good perception and knowledge,  
For I have believed Thy commandments.
- 67 Before I was afflicted I went astray,  
But now have I kept Thy word.
- 68 Thou art good, and doest good :  
Teach me Thy statutes.
- 69 The proud have forged a lie against me ;  
I, with (my) whole heart, will keep Thy precepts.
- 70 Their heart is as fat as grease :  
As for me, (in) Thy law do I delight.
- 71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted,  
That I might learn Thy statutes.
- 72 The law of Thy mouth is better unto me  
Than thousands of gold and silver.

*Yod.*

- 73 Thy hands have made me and fashioned me :  
Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy com-  
mandments.

66. GOOD PERCEPTION, lit. "goodness of perception" or discernment; that fine taste and delicate feeling which are like a new sense. So St. Paul prays for the Church at Philippi, that their "love may abound more and more in *knowledge* and in all *perception*," ἐν ἐπιγνώσει καὶ πάσῃ αἰσθήσει. The two words correspond to the two Hebrew words here; but the latter, αἰσθησις, marks in the Epistle (chap. i. 9) the *delicate tact* by which Christian love should be characterised. Here the Psalmist prays rather

for a *fine sense* or apprehension of God's word.

67. THY SAYING or "promise." See note on ver. 11.

69. THE PROUD. The same overbearing, tyrannical oppression already mentioned, ver. 51, 61.

HAVE FORGED, lit. "have patched up." Comp. Job xiii. 4.

70. FAT. For the figure as expressive of want of feeling, see xvii. 10, lxviii. 7; Is. vi. 10.

71. IT IS GOOD FOR ME. See ver. 67.

- 74 They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me ;  
For in Thy word have I hoped.
- 75 I know, O Jehovah, that Thy judgements are right,  
And that in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me.
- 76 Let, I pray Thee, Thy loving-kindness be for my  
comfort,  
According to Thy promise unto Thy servant.
- 77 Let Thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may  
live ;  
For Thy law is my delight.
- 78 Let the proud be ashamed, for they have dealt  
perversely with me without a cause :  
As for me, I meditate in Thy precepts.
- 79 They that fear Thee will turn unto me,  
And they shall know Thy testimonies.
- 80 Let my heart be perfect in Thy statutes,  
That I be not ashamed.

*Caph.*

- 81 My soul hath fainted for Thy salvation ;  
In Thy word have I hoped.
- 82 Mine eyes have failed for Thy promise,  
Saying, "When wilt Thou comfort me?"
- 83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke :  
(Yet) do I not forget Thy statutes.

76. Even when a man recognises that affliction is sent in "faithfulness," that God has a wise purpose of love in sending it, still is it in itself bitter, and therefore he prays that he may have God's "loving-kindness" and His "tender mercies" as his comfort in the midst of affliction. Comp. Heb. xii. 11.

79. WILL TURN, or there may be the expression of a wish, "Let them turn."

THEY SHALL KNOW. *i.e.* by their own experience.

80. PERFECT, *i.e.* whole, undivided.

83. A BOTTLE IN THE SMOKE, *i.e.* a skin bottle for wine. The figure is generally supposed to denote the misery and affliction of the Psalmist, who compares himself to one of these wine-skins blackened and shriveled and rendered useless by the smoke of the fire in which it is hung. Rosenm., however, explains it as the custom of the ancients to hang skins full of wine in the smoke, in order to mellow the wine. In this case, the figure would

- 84 How many are the days of Thy servant ?  
 When wilt Thou execute judgement on them that  
 persecute me ?
- 85 The proud have digged pits for me,  
 Who are not after Thy law.
- 86 All Thy commandments are faithfulness :  
 They persecute me wrongfully ; help Thou me.
- 87 They had almost consumed me upon earth ;  
 But as for me, I forsook not Thy precepts.
- 88 Quicken me after Thy loving-kindness,  
 So shall I keep the testimony of Thy mouth.

*Lamed.*

- 89 For ever, O Jehovah,  
 Thy word is settled in heaven ;
- 90 Thy faithfulness is unto all generations ;  
 Thou hast established the earth, and it standeth  
 fast :
- 91 For Thy judgements, they stand fast (unto) this day ;  
 For all things are Thy servants.
- 92 Unless Thy law had been my delight,  
 I should then have perished in my affliction.
- 93 I will never forget Thy precepts :  
 For by them Thou hast quickened me.
- 94 Thine am I, save me ;  
 For I have sought Thy precepts.
- 95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me ;  
 (But) Thy testimonies do I consider.

denote the mellowing and ripening of the character by affliction.

84. HOW MANY. Comp. xxxix. 4. It is an argument why God should take *speedy* vengeance on his enemies, that he may see it executed before he dies.

89. IN HEAVEN, as marking its un-

changing, everlasting character, as in lxxxix. 2.

91. FOR THY JUDGEMENTS, *i.e.* "with reference to Thine ordinances or laws, they (*i.e.* heaven and earth) stand fast."

ALL THINGS, lit. "the whole," *i.e.* the universe.



- 96 I have seen an end of all perfection ;  
Thy commandment is exceeding broad.

*Mem.*

- 97 O how I love Thy law :  
It is my meditation all the day.  
98 Thy commandments make me wiser than mine  
enemies ;  
For they are ever with me.  
99 I have more understanding than all my teachers ;  
For Thy testimonies are my meditation.  
100 I understand more than the aged ;  
For Thy precepts have I kept.  
101 I have refrained my feet from every evil path,  
That I might keep Thy word.  
102 From Thy judgements have I not turned aside ;  
For THOU hast taught me.  
103 How sweet is Thy promise unto my taste,  
(Yea, sweeter) than honey to my mouth.  
104 Through Thy precepts I get understanding ;  
Therefore I hate every path of falsehood.

*Nun.*

- 105 Thy word is a lamp unto my foot,  
And a light unto my path.

96. ALL PERFECTION. If this rendering is correct, the meaning is obvious. There is nothing upon earth to which there does not cleave some defect. But perhaps the clause should rather be rendered : "I have seen an end, a limit, to the whole range (or compass) of things ;" a meaning which may be defended by the use of the similar word in Job xxvi. 10, xxviii. 3, and which harmonizes with the next clause : "Thy commandment is exceeding broad," has no limits, whilst

all other things are bounded by a narrow compass.

BROAD. Comp. Job xi. 7—9.

98. MAKE ME WISER, *i.e.* teach me a different wisdom and a better wisdom than theirs ; not one which consists in policy, or craft, or human prudence. So, too, as he is wiser than his enemies, he is wiser than his teachers (ver. 99), wiser than the aged (ver. 100), and his wisdom is that practical wisdom which consists in the fear of the Lord, and which leads him to eschew all evil (ver. 101).

- 106 I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed  
That I will keep Thy righteous judgements.
- 107 I am afflicted very greatly ;  
Quicken me, O Jehovah, according unto Thy word.
- 108 Accept, I beseech Thee, O Jehovah, the freewill offerings of my mouth,  
And teach me Thy judgements.
- 109 My soul is continually in my hand ;  
Yet do I not forget Thy law.
- 110 The wicked have laid a snare for me ;  
Yet have I not strayed from Thy precepts.
- 111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever ;  
For they are the rejoicing of my heart.
- 112 I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes  
Always, (even unto) the end.

*Samech.*

- 113 I hate them that are of double mind,  
But Thy law do I love.
- 114 THOU art my hiding-place and my shield :  
I have hoped in Thy word.
- 115 Depart from me, ye evil doers,  
That so I may keep the commandments of my God.
- 116 Uphold me according unto Thy promise, that I may live,  
And let me not be ashamed of my hope.
- 117 Hold Thou me up, and so I shall be saved,  
And have respect unto Thy statutes continually.

109. MY SOUL IS IN MY HAND. He has been faithful even in constant peril of death. Comp. Judg. xii. 3 ; 1 Sam. xix. 5, xxviii. 21 ; Job xiii. 14.

111. God's law is an everlasting possession (comp. ver. 98), more truly so than the land of Canaan itself, which was given to Israel for an ever-

lasting heritage. Comp. xvi. 5, 6, where the Psalmist claims God Himself as his heritage.

113. OF DOUBLE MIND. See the noun from the same root, 1 Kings xviii. 21, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" and comp. the *ἀντί* *διψυχος* of St. James (i. 8).

- 118 Thou hast made light of all them that wander from  
Thy statutes ;  
For their deceit is falsehood.  
119 Thou hast put away all the wicked of the earth like  
dross ;  
Therefore I love Thy testimonies.  
120 My flesh trembleth for terror of Thee,  
And because of Thy judgements I am afraid.

*Ain.*

- 121 I have done judgement and righteousness ;  
Leave me not to mine oppressors.  
122 Be surety for Thy servant for good ;  
Let not the proud oppress me.  
123 Mine eyes fail for Thy salvation,  
And for the promise of Thy righteousness.  
124 Deal with Thy servant according to Thy loving-kind-  
ness,  
And teach me Thy statutes.  
125 I am Thy servant, give me understanding,  
That I may know Thy testimonies.  
126 It is time for Jehovah to act ;  
(For) they have broken Thy law.  
127 Therefore I love Thy commandments  
Above gold, yea, above fine gold.

118. FALSEHOOD, *i.e.* self-deception : they rely upon their deceitful artifices in vain, and only to their own confusion.

119. LIKE DROSS, *i.e.* by the fire of Thy judgement. Comp. Jer. vi. 28—30 ; Ezek. xxii. 18—20 ; Mal. iii. 2, 3.

120. TREMBLETH, or "shuddereth," strictly used of the hair as standing erect in terror. Comp. Job iv. 15.

121. JUDGEMENT AND RIGHT-

FOUSNESS, apparently terms employed with reference to the Law. It is equivalent to saying, "I have kept Thy law."

122. BE SURETY, as in Is. xxxviii. 14 ; Job xvii. 3. This and ver. 132 are the only two verses in the Psalm which contain no allusion to the Law.

126. TO ACT. The verb is used absolutely of God's acts of judgement, as in Jer. xviii. 23 ; Ezek. xxxi. 11.

- 128 Therefore I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all  
 (things) to be right ;  
 (And) I hate every false way.

*Pe.*

- 129 Wonderful are Thy testimonies ;  
 Therefore hath my soul kept them.  
 130 The revelation of Thy words giveth light,  
 It giveth understanding unto the simple.  
 131 I opened my mouth and panted ;  
 For I longed for Thy commandments.  
 132 Look Thou upon me, and be gracious unto me,  
 As Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy Name.  
 133 Establish my steps by Thy promise,  
 And let no iniquity have dominion over me.  
 134 Redeem me from the oppression of man,  
 That I may keep Thy precepts.  
 135 Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant,  
 And teach me Thy statutes.  
 136 In rivers of water mine eyes run down,  
 Because they keep not Thy law.

*Tsaddi.*

- 137 Righteous art Thou, O Jehovah,  
 And upright are Thy judgements.  
 138 Thou hast commanded Thy testimonies in righteousness  
 And exceeding faithfulness.

130. REVELATION, lit. "opening," i.e. *unfolding* or *unveiling*, not *entrance*, as in E. V.

131. I OPENED MY MOUTH, an expression denoting eager desire, as in Job xxix. 23. Like one oppressed with burning heat, and longing for some cool spring of water, or some fresh breeze to fan his brow.

133. HAVE DOMINION, as in xix. 13.

136. IN RIVERS OF WATER : see the same phrase Lam. iii. 48.

138. IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND FAITHFULNESS. The nouns may either be used adverbially, or they may be accusatives in apposition, "as righteousness," &c.

- 139 My zeal hath consumed me ;  
     Because mine adversaries have forgotten Thy  
     words.  
 140 Thy promise is tried to the uttermost,  
     And Thy servant loveth it.  
 141 I am small and despised ;  
     (Yet) do not I forget Thy precepts.  
 142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,  
     And Thy law is truth.  
 143 Distress and anguish have taken hold on me ;  
     Thy commandments are my delight.  
 144 The righteousness of Thy testimonies is everlasting ;  
     Give me understanding, that I may live.

*Koph.*

- 145 I called with (my) whole heart :  
     " Answer me, Jehovah, so will I keep Thy statutes."  
 146 I called upon Thee : " Save me,  
     So will I keep Thy statutes."  
 147 Early in the morning twilight did I cry ;  
     I hoped in Thy word.  
 148 Mine eyes have prevented the night-watches,  
     That I might meditate in Thy promises.  
 149 Hear my voice according unto Thy loving-kindness ;  
     O Jehovah, quicken me according to Thy judge-  
     ment.  
 150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief ;  
     They are far from Thy law.  
 151 THOU art nigh, O Jehovah,  
     And all Thy commandments are truth.

139. Comp. lxi. 9.

140. TRIED, lit. "fined," as metals are in the furnace, and hence pure, free from all admixture of dross, true. Comp. xii. 6.

147. EARLY, lit. "I was beforehand, in the twilight." The verb

means "to anticipate," "to go to meet," with the accus. (as in xvii. 13) ; and used absolutely, as here, it must mean "I rose early."

151. They are *nigh* (ver. 150) to persecute and destroy me ; Thou art *nigh* to help me.

- 152 Long since do I know from Thy testimonies  
That Thou hast founded them for ever.

*Resh.*

- 153 Look upon mine affliction, and deliver me;  
For I do not forget Thy law.  
154 Plead my cause and ransom me;  
Quicken me according to Thy word.  
155 Salvation is far from the wicked;  
For they have not sought Thy statutes.  
156 Many are Thy tender mercies, O Jehovah,  
Quicken me according to Thy judgements.  
157 Many are my persecutors and mine adversaries;  
I have not swerved from Thy testimonies.  
158 I saw the faithless and was grieved,  
Because they kept not Thy word.  
159 See how I love Thy precepts;  
Quicken me, O Jehovah, according to Thy loving-  
kindness.  
160 The sum of Thy word is truth,  
And every one of Thy righteous judgements  
(endureth) for ever.

*Schin.*

- 161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause;  
But my heart standeth in awe of Thy word.  
162 I rejoice because of Thy promise,  
As one that findeth great spoil.  
163 As for falsehood, I hate and abhor it;  
Thy law do I love.  
164 Seven times a day do I praise Thee,  
Because of Thy righteous judgements.

158. WAS GRIEVED, lit. "felt  
loathing." Comp. cxxxix. 21.

BECAUSE, or "who," viz. "the  
faithless."

- 165 Great peace have they which love Thy law,  
And they have no stumbling-block.  
166 I have hoped for Thy salvation, Jehovah,  
And have done Thy commandments.  
167 My soul hath kept Thy testimonies,  
And I love them exceedingly.  
168 I have kept Thy precepts and Thy testimonies ;  
For all my ways are before Thee.

## Tau.

- 169 Let my cry come near before Thy face, O Jehovah ;  
Give me understanding, according to Thy word.  
170 Let my supplication come before Thy face ;  
Deliver me according to Thy promise.  
171 Let my lips pour forth praise ;  
For Thou teachest me Thy statutes.  
172 Let my tongue sing of Thy promise,  
For all Thy commandments are righteousness.  
173 Let Thine hand be a help unto me ;  
For I have chosen Thy precepts.  
174 I have longed for Thy salvation, O Jehovah,  
And Thy law is my delight.  
175 Let my soul live, and praise Thee,  
And let Thy judgements help me.  
176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep : seek Thy  
servant,

165. NO STUMBLING-BLOCK. LXX. οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῖς σκάνδαλον. Comp. the words of St. John, σκάνδαλον οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῷ (1 John ii. 10). So we may supply here, "no stumbling-block *in them*," or "in their path." When God's law is loved, instead of being struggled against, the conscience is at peace, and the inward eye is clear ; a man sees his duty and does it, free from

those stumbling-blocks which are ever occasion of falling to others.

166. I HAVE HOPED. Comp. the words of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 18.

168. FOR ALL MY WAYS. In saying "I have kept Thy precepts," I make no vain boast, I say it as in Thy sight, who seest all my life.

172. SING OF, or perhaps "repeat," "echo."

176. According to the accents, the

For I do not forget Thy commandments.

rendering would rather be, "I have gone astray; seek Thy servant as a lost sheep." In what sense can one who has so repeatedly declared his love of God's word, who has asserted that he has kept God's precepts, make this confession? The figure cannot be employed here in the same sense, for instance, in which it is employed in our Lord's parable. He who is the lost sheep here is one who does not forget God's commandments. The figure, therefore, seems in this place

to denote the helpless condition of the Psalmist, without protectors, exposed to enemies, in the midst of whom he wanders, not knowing where to find rest and shelter. But in the "I have gone astray," there is doubtless the sense of sin as well as of weakness, though there is also the consciousness of love to God's law, "I do not forget Thy commandments." Comp. with this xix. 12-14. The word rendered "lost" may be rendered "ready to perish."

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## PSALM CXX.

WITH this Psalm begins a series of fifteen Psalms, all bearing the same title, "Songs of the goings-up" (E.V. "Songs of degrees"), and constituting originally, no doubt, a separate hymn-book—a Psalter within a Psalter. Of the different interpretations which have been given, the most probable is that which supposes that the Psalms to which this title is prefixed were intended to be sung by the caravans of pilgrims "going up" to keep the yearly feasts at Jerusalem. The collection in its present form must have been made after the return from Babylon, some of the songs containing manifest allusions to the Captivity as still in the recollection of the writers. All these odes have certain features in common. With one exception (the 132nd) they are all short—the utterance of a single thought or feeling, a sigh, a hope, a joy. They are all pervaded by the same quiet, graceful, tender beauty, the charm of which was so felt by a Spanish commentator, that he does not hesitate to say that this collection is to the rest of the Psalms what Paradise was to the rest of the world at its first creation.

The first in the collection is a prayer against the lying tongues of treacherous neighbours, whom the Poet compares, for their cruelty



and perfidy, to the savage hordes of the Caucasus or of the Arabian desert. But whether the Psalmist thus pictures the heathen among whom he dwells in exile, or the wild tribes with whom no treaty can be kept, by whom he is beset on his way back from Babylon to Palestine, or the Samaritans, Arabians, and others, who after their return attempted, by false representations to the Persian monarch, to thwart the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra iv.) and the fortification of the city (Nehem. ii.—iv.), it is impossible to say. The allusions are brief and obscure.

## [A PILGRIM SONG.]

- 1 UNTO Jehovah, when I was in distress,  
I cried, and He answered me.
- 2 O Jehovah, deliver my soul from lying lips,  
From a deceitful tongue.
- 3 What shall He give unto thee, and what shall He add  
unto thee,  
O thou deceitful tongue?
- 4 Sharp arrows of the mighty,

1. CRIED . . . ANSWERED. The verbs are in the past tense, but do not refer merely to a past occasion. Past experience and present are here combined. From the past he draws encouragement for the present.

3. GIVE . . . ADD. The phrase seems to mean: "What calamities shall He heap upon thee? How shall punishment upon punishment visit thee?"

4. The expressions of this verse may either (1) describe further the treacherous tongue ("thou that art as sharp arrows," &c.), as in lvii. 4, "whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword," lxiv. 3, "who have sharpened their tongue like the sword, and have aimed their arrow, even a bitter word"—see also lv. 21, lix. 7; or (2) the punishment of the tongue, a punishment according

with its character. As the lying tongue is a sharp sword (lvii. 4), as it is a sharp arrow (Jer. ix. 8), as it is set on fire of hell (James iii. 6), so shall the man who employs it be destroyed by the arrows and the fire of the Mighty One, *i.e.* God.

It is in favour of the first interpretation that it falls in with the general scope of the Psalm, in which the Poet complains that, loving peace himself, he meets with nothing but hostility and treachery. On the other hand, that he should burst forth into an imprecation of God's judgements on the head of these treacherous neighbours is quite in accordance with what we find in other Psalms, where the circumstances are similar. Comp., for instance, Ps. lviii.

THE MIGHTY. Even if we take this verse as describing the punish-

With coals of broom.

- 5 Woe is me that I have sojourned in Meshech,  
That I have dwelt beside the tents of Kedar.
- 6 My soul hath too long dwelt  
With him that hateth peace.
- 7 As for me, I (am for) peace ;  
But when I speak, they (are) for war.

ment of the lying tongue, we need not take "the mighty" to mean God, as the Talmud does. The expression may only mean "sharp arrows, as of a warrior." Comp. cxxvii. 4; Jer. l. 9.

BROOM, not as E. V., following Jerome, "juniper." The shrub meant is the *genista monosperma* (Arab. *retem*), the root of which, according to Burckhardt (*Itin.* ii. p. 791), is used for fires in the desert, and has the property of retaining the heat for a considerable time. The same shrub is mentioned 1 King: xix. 4; Job xxx. 4. The latter passage may mean, not that the root of the *genista* was used for food, which seems unlikely, as it is very bitter, but perhaps that it was used for fire, "to warm them" (comp. Is. xlvii. 14). Wonderful stories are told by Jerome (*De mansionibus Israel ad Fabulam*, xv.), and in the Midrash Tehillim, how travellers, having cooked their food with a fire made of the juniper-wood (which they suppose to be the wood here meant), and returning a year after to the same spot, still found the embers alive.

These COALS are an image either of the burning, devouring character of the tongue, or of its punishment. "Arrows WITH (*i.e.* together with) coals," not, as others, "fiery arrows," or "arrows sharpened and made hard by means of fire," which would have been differently expressed.

5. MESHECH, probably the Moschi of Herodotus (iii. 94), mentioned, together with Tubal, Gen. x. 2, Ezek. xxvii. 13; a barbarous tribe situated south-east of the Caucasus, between the Black Sea and the Araxes; and

KEDAR, one of the predatory hordes roaming the Arabian desert. By the names of these remote and barbarous tribes, the one to the north, the other to the south of Palestine, the Psalmist intends to mark the savage character of those who surround him. We might speak in the same way, says De Wette, of Turks and Hottentots.

7. The literal rendering of the first clause is, "I (am) peace," as in cix. 4, "I (am) prayer." The pronoun in each clause is emphatic.

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## PSALM CXXI.

THIS beautiful Psalm is the trustful expression of a heart rejoicing in its own safety under the watchful eye of Him who is both the

Maker of heaven and earth, and the Keeper of Israel. The Creator of the Universe, the Keeper of the nation, is also the Keeper of the individual. The one ever-recurring thought, the one, characteristic word of the Psalm, is this word *keep*. Six times it is repeated in the last five verses of this one short ode. The beauty of this repetition is unfortunately destroyed in the Authorized Version by the substitution in the last three instances, in verses 7 and 8, of the verb "preserve" for the verb "keep." For the use of the same word in the original is evidently designed,—designed to mark by this emphasis of iteration the truth of God's loving care for the individual, and so to banish all shadow of doubt, fear, anxiety, lest in the vast sum the unit should be forgotten.

Under what circumstances the Psalm was written is doubtful. Some suppose it to have been written in exile. Others understand by "the mountains" in ver. 1, not the mountains of Palestine at large, but the one mountain or mountain-group of Zion, as the dwelling-place of God, the plural being used as in cxxxiii. 3, lxxxvii. 1, and leave it an open question whether the Psalmist was in exile, or merely at a distance from the sanctuary.

Others, again, have conjectured that this was the song sung by the caravans of pilgrims going up to the yearly feasts, when first they came in sight of the mountains on which Jerusalem stands.

The Psalm has no marked divisions, but falls naturally into pairs of verses. The Inscription, "A song *for* the goings-up," differs slightly from that which is prefixed to other odes of this collection.

## [A PSALM.]

- 1 I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the mountains.  
     Whence should my help come?  
 2 My help (cometh) from Jehovah,

1 THE MOUNTAINS, as already remarked in the Introduction, either those of Palestine, as in Nahum i. 15, and in Ezekiel, "the mountains of Israel;" or, the ridge on which lay Jerusalem and the Temple.

Comp. lxxxvii. 1; cxxxiii. 3; xiv. 7, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion;" xx. 2, "Jehovah send thee help from the sanctuary, and uphold thee out of Zion."

- The Maker of heaven and earth.  
 3 May He not suffer thy foot to be moved ;  
     May He that keepeth thee not slumber.  
 4 Behold, He doth neither slumber nor sleep  
     That keepeth Israel.  
 5 Jehovah is thy Keeper,  
     Jehovah is thy shade upon thy right hand.  
 6 The sun shall not smite thee by day,  
     Nor the moon by night.  
 7 Jehovah shall keep thee from all evil,  
     He shall keep thy soul,  
 8 Jehovah shall keep thy going out and thy  
     coming in,

2. MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH; a name of God occurring especially in these Pilgrim odes, and other later Psalms, as in cxv. 15, cxxiv. 8, cxxxiv. 3, cxlvi. 6. God's creative power and majesty were, especially during the Exile, impressed upon the heart of the nation, in contrast with the vanity of the gods of the heathen. Comp. Jer. x. 11, "Then shall ye say unto them (*i.e.* the Jews to the Chaldeans), The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens."

3. The Psalmist turns to address himself. First he utters the wish that God's watchful care may be extended to him; then the conviction that the Keeper of Israel, He who has been the God of his fathers, whose Hand has led the nation through all its eventful history, doth not—will not, cannot—slumber nor sleep. Comp. cxxxii. 4; 1 Kings xviii. 27; Is. v. 27.

5. THY SHADE, as a protection against the burning rays of the sun. Comp. xci. 1, "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;" Is.

xxv. 4, "Thou hast been a shadow from the heat;" xxxii. 2, "As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

UPON THY RIGHT HAND: a figure, denoting generally succour, help, &c. (as in cix. 31, cx. 5), *i.e.* Jehovah standing upon thy right hand to defend thee is thy shade.

6. Sun-stroke, a special danger of the East. See 2 Kings iv. 18—20; Joh. iv. 6; and comp. Ps. cii. 4, where the heart is said to be *smitten* like grass. In the same way the influence of the moon is considered to be very injurious to the human frame, in hot climates more particularly. Delitzsch mentions having heard from Texas that the consequence of sleeping in the open air when the moon was shining was dizziness, mental aberration, and even death. The names given to persons of disordered intellect, *σεληνιαζόμενοι*, *lunatici*, "lunatics," arose from the widespread belief in the effects of the moon on those who were exposed to its influence.

8. THY GOING OUT AND THY COMING IN; a phrase denoting the whole life and occupations of a man.

From this time forth and for evermore.

Comp. Deut. xxviii. 6, xxxi. 2 ;  
1 Sam. xxix. 6, &c. The threefold  
expression, "shall keep *thee* . . .  
*thy soul* . . . *thy going out and thy*

*coming in,*" marks the completeness  
of the protection vouchsafed, ex-  
tending to all that the man is and  
that he does. Comp. 1 Thess. v. 23.

## PSALM CXXII.

THIS Psalm, more emphatically than any in the collection to which it belongs, merits the title of a Pilgrim song. It was evidently composed with immediate reference to one of the three yearly festivals, when the caravans of pilgrims "went up" to the Holy City. The Poet is living in the country. As the time of the Feast draws near, his friends and neighbours come to him, inviting him to join them in their visit to Jerusalem. It is with this picture that he begins his Poem. He tells us how his heart filled with joy as they bade him come with them "to the house of Jehovah." We see the procession starting ; we see beaming eyes and happy faces, and hear the music of gladness with which the pilgrims beguile the tediousness of the journey. The next verse transports us at once to the Holy City itself. "Our feet have stood within thy gates;" the few words are enough. They have reached their journey's end ; they are in the city which they love. Then the Poet tells us, first, the impression made upon his mind by her stateliness and her beauty ; and next how there comes crowding upon his memory the scenes of her earlier grandeur, the thought of all she had been as the gathering-place of the tribes of Jehovah, the royal seat of David and of his house.

Filled with these thoughts, inspired by these memories, he bursts forth into hearty, fervent prayer—the prayer of one who loved his country as he loved his God, with no common devotion—for the welfare of that city so glorious in her past history, and with which all hopes for the future were so intimately bound up. And so the beautiful ode closes.

The Psalm is called in the title a Song of David. It is certainly possible that Psalms written by him might be comprised in a collection

which formed a hymn-book for the pilgrims ; but I cannot think that the expression "thrones of the house of David" would be a natural one in David's lips. The phrase points, surely, to a dynasty which has long been established : verses 4 and 5 are clearly a retrospect.

As most, if not all, of these Psalms belong to a period subsequent to the Captivity, we turn more naturally to that time as furnishing the occasion for the composition of this ode. But, even if we fix upon that as the most probable date, still the question arises, Is the whole Psalm a retrospect, or does it spring out of the new life of the people ? Does it paint only the recollection of former pilgrimages in the days of Zion's first glory, or does it paint the feelings of one who sees the old state of things revived, and who joins the pilgrims going up now as they went up of yore ?

The Psalm is too bright, the pictures are too fresh, to be the utterance of an old man returned from the Exile (as some think) or of one still far from his native land. There is none of that "deep sighing" of the exile or the old man looking back on a departed glory which must have made itself felt, none of that melancholy which breathes, for instance, in such a Psalm as the 42nd, and even the 84th. The gladness of the first verse is a gladness still warm at the heart of the Poet ; the picture of the second is one the lines of which are not yet effaced from the eye of his mind. The reminiscences of the past, as he has heard the tale from others, or as he has read it in the words of other Psalmists and Prophets, mingle with the present, and Jerusalem, rising from her ashes, seems to him fair and stately, her bulwarks strong, and her palaces magnificent, as of old.

[A PILGRIM SONG. OF DAVID.]

- 1 I WAS glad when they said unto me,  
     Let us go into the house of Jehovah.  
 2 Our feet have stood

1. THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH. His joy was that he should worship *there* "in the presence of Jehovah."

2. HAVE STOOD. This may be a strict perfect, implying that they are *still standing*. It is the lively expres-

- Within thy gates, O Jerusalem.  
 3 Jerusalem, that art built  
     As a city which is compact together !  
 4 Whither the tribes went up, the tribes of Jah,  
     (As it was) a law for Israel,  
     To give thanks to the Name of Jehovah.  
 5 For there were set thrones for judgement,

sion of the satisfaction and delight of one who finds himself on this high day of festal joy within the sacred walls, mingling with the throng of worshippers who crowd the courts of the Temple, and taking his part, with a full sense of his privileges as an Israelite, in the solemn services of the Feast.

3. BUILT. This has been explained in three different ways. (1) It has been closely joined with what follows, "built as a city which," &c. (2) It has been taken in the sense of "well-built, stately." (3) It has been understood emphatically to describe the city as *rebuilt* after the Exile, "which is built again," or, "O thou that art built again." Of these, the last is preferable.

COMPACT. This has been understood by some to refer to the natural conformation of the ground on which the city stood. So Stanley, speaking of "those deep ravines which separate Jerusalem from the rocky plateau of which it forms a part," observes that they must have not only "acted as its natural defence, but must also have determined its natural boundaries. The city, wherever else it spread, could never overleap the valley of the Kedron or of Hinnom. . . . The expression of *compactness* was still more appropriate to the original city, if, as seems probable, the valley of Tyropæon formed in earlier times a fosse within a fosse, shutting in Zion and Moriah into one

compact mass, not more than half a mile in breadth."—*Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 172, 173.

If, however, the Psalm refers, as is probable, to the city as rebuilt after the Exile, then the epithet alludes to the reconstruction of walls and houses; the city is compact, because there are no more waste places, no more gaps and heaps of ruin.

4. The Poet glances here, and in the next verse, at the earlier times, when Jerusalem had been the great religious and political centre of the nation, the dwelling-place of Jehovah, to whose Temple all the tribes were gathered at the three great Feasts, and the seat of government of the kings of the house of David.

A LAW. The word usually means "testimony," but here must evidently be understood in a wider sense. The "law" is that according to which all males were to appear before the Lord three times in the year: Ex. xxiii. 17, xxxiv. 23; Deut. xvi. 16. Comp. Ps. lxxxi. 4, 5.

5. FOR. Jerusalem had become the religious capital of the nation, because it was already the civil capital. The law had enjoined that the supreme tribunal should be in the same place as the sanctuary (Deut. xvii. 8, 9). But Jerusalem was first the civil metropolis, "the city of David" (2 Sam. v. 9, vi. 12, 16), before it became "the city of God." To a Jewish mind, however, the religious and the political importance

(The) thrones of the house of David.

- 6 O pray for the peace of Jerusalem :  
They shall prosper that love thee.
- 7 Peace be within thy bulwarks,  
Prosperity within Thy palaces.
- 8 For my brethren and friends' sakes,  
Let me now wish thee peace.
- 9 For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God  
I will seek thy good.

of the city were not so much contrasted as identical; Church and State were not two, but one.

THRONES FOR JUDGEMENT. The king was also the judge: see on lxxii. 1. Comp. 2 Sam. xv. 2; 1 Kings iii. 16, 17.

THE HOUSE OF DAVID. The expression plainly points to successors of David, not to members of his family associated with himself in government, administration of justice, &c.

7. BULWARKS . . . PALACES, as in xlvi. 13.

8. The last four verses of the Psalm breathe a spirit of the noblest, most unselfish patriotism. Not for his own sake, but for the sake of his brethren—the people at large—and for the sake of his God, His temple, and His service, he wishes peace to Jerusalem, and calls upon others to wish her peace. With love to Israel, and love to Jehovah, there is naturally united a warm affection for Jerusalem, a hearty interest in her welfare.

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## PSALM CXXIII.

ALSTED beautifully entitles this Psalm *Oculus Sperans*, "The Eye of Hope." "This," says Luther, "is a deep sigh of a pained heart which looks round on all sides, and seeks friends, protectors, and comforters, but can find none. Therefore it says, 'Where shall I, a poor despised man, find refuge? I am not so strong as to be able to preserve myself; wisdom and plans fail me among the multitude of adversaries who assault me; therefore I come to Thee, O my God, to Thee I lift my eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens.' He



places over against each other the Inhabitant of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, and reminds himself that, though the world be high and powerful, God is higher still. What shouldest thou do, then, when the world despises and insults thee? Turn thine eyes thither, and see that God with His beloved angels and His elect looks down upon thee, rejoices in thee, and loves thee."

This Psalm is either the sigh of the exile, towards the close of the Captivity looking in faith and patience for the deliverance which he had reason to hope was now nigh at hand; or it is the sigh of those who, having already returned to their native land, were still exposed to "the scorn and contempt" of the Samaritans and others, who, favoured by the Persian Government, took every opportunity of harassing and insulting the Jews. Comp. Nehem. ii. 19, "They laughed us to scorn and despised us," with ver. 4 of the Psalm, "The scorn of them that are at ease, the contempt of the proud."

## [A PILGRIM SONG.]

- 1 UNTO Thee do I lift up mine eyes,  
 O Thou that art throned in the heavens!  
 2 Behold, as the eyes of slaves unto the hand of their  
     masters,  
     As the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her  
     mistress;  
 So our eyes (look) unto Jehovah our God,  
 Until He be gracious unto us.

1. Comp. cxxi. 1.

2. AS THE EYES OF SLAVES, watching anxiously the least movement, the smallest sign of their master's will. The image expresses complete and absolute dependence. Savary (in his *Letters on Egypt*, p. 135) says: "The slaves stand silent at the bottom of the rooms with their hands crossed over their breasts. *With their eyes fixed upon their master*, they seek to anticipate every one of his wishes." Comp. the Latin

phrases, *a nutu pendere*, *a vultu, ore*, &c. Plautus (*Aulul.*) uses the expression of a slave "*oculos in oculis heri habere*;" and Terence (*Adelph.*) "*oculos nunquam ab oculis dimovere*." In those passages, however, the ready *obedience* of the slave may also be denoted by his attitude. In the Psalm the eye directed to the hand of God is the *oculus sperans*, the eye which waits, and hopes, and is patient, looking only to Him and none other for help.

- 3 Be gracious unto us, O Jehovah, be gracious unto us,  
 For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.  
 4 Our soul is exceedingly filled  
 With the scorn of them that are at ease,  
 With the contempt of the proud.

3. EXCEEDINGLY FILLED, or perhaps "has long been filled." (Comp. cxx. 6.) This expression, together with the earnestness of the repeated prayer, "Be gracious unto us," shows that the "scorn" and "contempt" have long pressed upon the people, and their faith accordingly exposed to a severe trial. The more remark-

able is the entire absence of anything like impatience in the language of the Psalm. From the expression of trustful dependence with which it opens, it passes to the earnest, heart-felt *kyrie eleison* in which it pours out in a few words the trouble whence springs the prayer.

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## PSALM CXXIV.

THE last Psalm was the sigh of an exile in Babylon, waiting in absolute trust and dependence upon God for the deliverance of himself and his people from captivity. This Psalm is the joyful acknowledgement that the deliverance has been vouchsafed. The next Psalm, the 125th, describes the safety of the new colony, restored to its native land, and girt round by the protection of Jehovah. Here, then, we have three successive pictures, or rather three parts of one and the same picture; for they are not only linked together, as representing successive scenes in one history, but they are also pervaded by one great master thought, which lends its unity to the whole group. In each there is the same full recognition of Jehovah's grace and power as working both for the deliverance and the security of His people. In the 123rd Psalm, "The eye waits upon Jehovah, till He be gracious." In the 124th, "If Jehovah had not been on our side, men had swallowed us up alive. . . . Our help is in the name of Jehovah." In the 125th, "The mountains are about Jerusalem, and Jehovah is round about His people."

There can be little doubt that this Psalm (the 124th) records the feelings of the exiles when the proclamation of Cyrus at length permitted them to return to their native land. Yet the figures employed are somewhat startling. The swelling waters rising till they threaten to sweep all before them is an image expressing, far more strongly than anything in the history would seem to warrant, the hostility of their conquerors to the Jews. The bird escaped from the broken snare is an image rather of sudden, unlooked-for deliverance, than of a return so deliberate, so slow, in some instances apparently so reluctant, as that of the Jews from Babylon. The figures remind one rather of the earlier deliverance from Egypt. The Egyptians did "rise up" against them. Pharaoh and his chariots and his horsemen followed hard after them, and did seem as if about to swallow them up when they were entangled in the wilderness. The waves of the Red Sea overwhelming their enemies might have suggested naturally the figure by which the might of those enemies was itself compared to swelling waters. The hasty flight might well be likened to the escape of the bird from the broken snare; the blow struck in the death of the first-born to the breaking of the snare.

Still the language of poetry must not be too closely pressed. Individuals may have felt strongly their oppression in Babylon. How keenly some had reason to remember their captive condition, we see from the 137th Psalm. And the providential means by which their deliverance was at last effected were unlooked for, and may have well taken them by surprise. The power of Babylon had been broken by Cyrus, and the conqueror had set them free. "When Jehovah turned again the captivity of Zion, then were we like unto them that dream." Moreover, we know how constantly both Prophets and Psalmists are in the habit of comparing the return from Babylon to the deliverance from Egypt. Twice had the nation been in bondage to other nations, in a strange land; twice had the yoke of its masters been broken; and, unlike as the circumstances may have been under which the two great acts of national redemption were accomplished, still the one was naturally associated in the minds and thoughts of the people with the other. And hence a Poet celebrating the one might almost unconsciously borrow his imagery from the other.

The title, which gives the Psalm to David, is probably of no authority.

[A PILGRIM SONG. OF DAVID.]

- 1 IF Jehovah had not been on our side,—  
 May Israel now say—  
 2 If Jehovah had not been on our side,  
 When men rose up against us ;  
 3 Then had they swallowed us up alive,  
 When their anger was kindled against us ;  
 4 Then had the waters overwhelmed us,  
 The stream had gone over our soul ;  
 5 Then there had gone over our soul  
 The proudly-swelling waters.  
 6 Blessed be Jehovah,  
 Who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.  
 7 Our soul is escaped as a bird from the snare of the  
 fowlers ;  
 The snare is broken, and we are escaped.  
 8 Our help is in the Name of Jehovah,  
 The Maker of heaven and earth.

3. SWALLOWED US UP ALIVE. Comp. *iv.* 15 ; *Prov.* *i.* 12 ; with *Num.* *xvi.* 32, 33, where the phrase is used of the company of Korah.

4. THE STREAM, *i.e.* the mountain-torrent as swollen by the rains and

the melting of the snow in spring. For the figure comp. *xviii.* 16, *lxix.* 1, 2, *cxliv.* 7.

5. PROUDLY-SWELLING. Comp. *xlvi.* 3, *lxxxix.* 9, and the *ἰβριστῆς ποταμός* of *Æschylus*, *P. V.* 717.

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## PSALM CXXV.

THE exiles had been restored to their own land (see Introduction to last Psalm), but fresh perils awaited them there. Not only were they perpetually molested by the Samaritans and others in the

rebuilding of the Temple and of the city walls, but they were troubled with internal dissensions; Ezra found the "abominations of the heathen" countenanced by the intermarriages of the Jews who returned from the Captivity with "the people of those lands," and was dismayed when he learnt that "the hand of the princes and the rulers had been chief in this trespass." Nehemiah, at a later period, had to contend against a faction within the city who had taken the bribes of the Samaritans. In rebuilding the walls, he did not trust the priests, the nobles, or the rulers, till he had begun the work (Neh. ii. 16, vi. 17). Even the prophets took part with his enemies against him. Shemaiah, he found, had been hired by Tobiah and Sanballat, and "the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets" had joined the plot, and sought "to put him in fear," and so to hinder his work (vi. 10—14).

To these plots and this defection on the part of many of the Jews themselves there is probably an allusion in ver. 3 and 5. On the other hand, the faith of the Psalmist rises above all these dangers. There is One who is the sure defence of His people, who is their bulwark as the mountains are the bulwark of Jerusalem.

## [A PILGRIM SONG.]

- 1 THEY that trust in Jehovah are like Mount Zion,  
Which cannot be moved,  
(But) standeth fast for ever.  
2 As for Jerusalem, the mountains are round about her,

1, 2. Two images of the security of those who trust in Jehovah: (1) they stand firm as Zion itself, they are like a mountain which cannot be shaken; (2) they are girt as by a wall of mountains—a natural bulwark against all enemies.

2. MOUNTAINS ARE ROUND ABOUT HER. "This image is not realized," says Dean Stanley, "as most persons familiar with our European scenery would wish and expect it to be realized. Jerusalem is not literally shut

in by mountains, except on the eastern side, where it may be said to be enclosed by the arms of Olivet, with its outlying ridges on the north-east and south-east." Viewed from any other direction, Jerusalem always appears "on an elevation higher than the hills in its immediate neighbourhood. Nor is the plain on which it stands enclosed by a continuous though distant circle of mountains like that which gives its peculiar charm to Athens and Innsbruck. The

And Jehovah is round about His people,  
From this time even for evermore.

3 For the rod of wickedness shall not rest upon the lot of  
the righteous,

That the righteous put not forth their hands unto  
iniquity.

4 Do good, O Jehovah, to them that are good,  
And to them that are upright in their hearts.

5 But as for those who turn aside to their crooked paths,

mountains in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem are of unequal height, . . . only in two or three instances . . . rising to any considerable elevation. Even Olivet is only 180 feet above the top of Mount Zion. Still they act as a shelter; they must be surmounted before the traveller can see, or the invader attack, the Holy City; and the distant line of Moab would always seem to rise as a wall against invaders from the remote east." It is of these distant mountains that Josephus speaks (*Bell. Jud.* vi. v. 1) as "the surrounding mountains," *συνήχει δὲ ἡ περὰ καὶ τὰ πέριξ ὄρη.* —*Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 174, 175.

IS ROUND ABOUT HIS PEOPLE. Comp. Zech. ii. 4, 5, "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about."

3. FOR introduces an example of God's protecting care—an example not taken from the past, but which faith anticipates and is sure of, as if already accomplished.

THE ROD OF WICKEDNESS. The expression may refer to the Persian rule under favour of which the Samaritans and others annoyed the Jews. The *rod* or *sceptre* could not apply to the Samaritans, for they did not *rule* over the Jews. But it was through them that the tyranny of the Persian court made itself felt; and they con-

trived, moreover, to gain over a considerable part, and that the most influential part, of the Jews to their side. The fear was, as the next clause shows, lest in this state of things the defection should spread still more widely.

REST, *i.e.* "lie heavy," so as to oppress, as in Is. xxv. 10, with a further sense of continuance of the oppression.

THE LOT OF THE RIGHTEOUS is the Holy Land itself; comp. xvi. 5, 6. The consequence of a long continuance of this oppressive rule would be that THE RIGHTEOUS, the sound and true part of the nation, would itself be tempted to despair of God's succour, and so be drawn away from its stedfastness (comp. xxxvii. 7, 8, xlix. 13, lxxiii. 13, 14; Job xv. 4).

4, 5. The Psalm ends with a confident assertion of righteous requital—first in the form of a prayer, and then in the utterance of a hope, both springing from the same faith in the righteousness of God.

5. TURN ASIDE TO THEIR CROOKED PATHS, lit. "bend their crooked paths," *i.e.* so turn their paths aside as to make them crooked. Comp. Judg. v. 6. The expression does not necessarily denote a going over to heathenism; it would describe the conduct of those who, in the time of Nehemiah, made common cause with

Jehovah shall make them go their way with the  
workers of iniquity.  
Peace be upon Israel.

the enemies of Israel (Neh. vi. 10—  
14, xiii. 28—31).

so as to perish.

MAKE THEM GO THEIR WAY, *i.e.*

PEACE UPON ISRAEL. Comp. the  
conclusion of cxxviii.

## PSALM CXXVI.

THE first colony of exiles had returned to Palestine. The permission to return had been so unexpected, the circumstances which had led to it so wonderful and so unforeseen, that when it came it could hardly be believed. To those who found themselves actually restored to the land of their fathers it seemed like a dream. It was a joy beyond all words to utter. God, their father's God, had indeed wrought for them, and even the heathen had recognised His hand.

It is with these thoughts that this beautiful Psalm opens. But, after all, what was that little band of settlers which formed the first caravan? It was only as the trickling of a tiny rill in some desert waste. Hence the prayer bursts from the lips of the Psalmist, Bring back our captives like mighty streams, which, swoln by the wintry rains, descend to fertilize the parched and desolate wilderness. Then comes the thought of the many discouragements and opposition which the first settlers had to encounter; it was a time of sowing in tears (Ezra iv. 11—24). Still, faith could expect a joyful harvest. He who had restored them to the land would assuredly crown His work with blessing.

[A PILGRIM SONG.]

I WHEN Jehovah brought back the returned of Zion,  
We were like unto them that dream.

1. LIKE UNTO THEM THAT DREAM,  
*i.e.* so unexpected and so wonderful  
was our redemption from the Exile,

that we could scarcely believe it was  
true, and not a dream.

- 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter,  
And our tongue with songs of joy.
- 3 Then said they among the nations,  
"Jehovah hath done great things for them."
- 4 (Yea) Jehovah hath done great things for us;  
(Therefore) were we glad.
- 5 Bring back, O Jehovah, our captives  
As streams in the south.
- 6 They that sow in tears  
Shall reap with songs of joy.
- 7 (The sower) may go along weeping,  
Bearing (his) handful of seed;
- 8 He shall surely come with songs of joy,

2. FILLED WITH LAUGHTER, as in Job viii. 21.

5. STREAMS, or rather "channels" (watercourses). The south is the image of a dry and thirsty land, which wanted springs. Comp. Judg. i. 15.

Palestine without her people has been like the south country parched with the drought of summer: the return of her inhabitants will be grateful as the return of the mountain torrents when, swoln by the wintry rains, they flow again along the beds of the watercourses, carrying with them life and verdure and fertility. We find the expression of the same feeling under a different figure Is. xlix. 18, where the land, like a bereaved mother, waits for her children, whose return will fill her heart with joy.

6. THEY THAT SOW IN TEARS. The sowing is a season of trouble and anxiety, but the rich harvest makes amends for all. So though the new

colonists were exposed to many trials, yet a glorious future was before them. That time of labour, and trouble, and opposition, and discouragement, and anxious waiting, should by no means lose its reward. The weeping should be changed into joy; the weeping should be the path of joy. Comp. for the contrast between the sowing and the reaping, Haggai ii. 3—9, 17—19.\*

7, 8. These verses are merely an expansion of the image in ver. 6, with the common substitution of the singular for the plural, to bring out more clearly the figure of the individual sower.

7. This verse might perhaps be more exactly rendered: "He who beareth the handful of seed may indeed weep every step that he goes."

GO ALONG WEEPING, or, yet more strongly, "take no step of his way without weeping."

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\* Edmund Poole, accused of conspiring to place Mary Queen of Scots on the English throne, and confined in that part of the Tower of London called the Beauchamp Tower, has left this record of himself engraven on the walls—I.H.S. Qui Semin . . . in lachrimis in exultatione metet, A.E. 21, E. Poole, 1562.



Bearing his sheaves (with him).

HANDFUL OF SEED, lit. "that which is drawn into the hand" out of the vessel or fold of the robe to be scattered on the field. Hence a sower is called "a drawer of seed," Amos ix. 13.

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PSALM CXXVII.

THIS and the next Psalm form two bright companion pictures of social and domestic life, and of the happiness of a household which, trained in the fear of God, is blessed by His providence.

There is not a word in either Psalm to guide us as to the time of its composition. The title gives the 127th to Solomon (only one other in the entire Psalter, the 72nd, being ascribed to him), but it may be doubted whether with sufficient reason. In form, in rhythm, in general tone and character, it resembles all the others in this collection. It has been conjectured that the proverb-like structure of the Psalm, the occurrence in it of several words and phrases also occurring in the Proverbs, and possibly a supposed allusion to the name Jedediah in ver. 2, "His beloved," and to the building of the Temple in ver. 1, may have led some collector to conclude that the Psalm was Solomon's. In the Septuagint it is anonymous. In the Syriac it is said to have been spoken by David concerning Solomon; but also concerning Haggai and Zechariah, who urged the building of the Temple.

The great moral of the Psalm is, that without God's blessing all human efforts and human precautions are in vain; that man can never command success; that God gives and man receives. There is a passage in Tennyson's "Lotos Eaters," the strain of which is not unlike that of ver. 3 of the Psalm, except that there is a shadow of sadness and weariness on the words of the modern Poet which does not rest on the spirit of the Hebrew bard :—

"Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,  
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,

While all things else have rest from weariness?  
 All things have rest : why should we toil alone?  
 We only toil who are the first of things,  
 And make perpetual moan,  
 Still from one sorrow to another thrown :  
 Nor ever fold our wings,  
 And cease from wanderings ;  
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm ;  
 Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,  
 ' There is no joy but calm !'  
 Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things ? ”

[A PILGRIM SONG. OF SOLOMON.\*]

- 1 EXCEPT Jehovah build the house,  
 They labour upon it in vain that build it ;  
 Except Jehovah watch over a city,  
 (The) watchman waketh (but) in vain.
- 2 Vain is it for you that ye rise up early, that ye late  
 take rest,  
 That ye eat the bread of sorrows ;  
 So He giveth His beloved sleep.

1, 3. The truth seems obvious and undeniable that all success is from God, “An Gottes Segen ist alles gelegen ;” yet practically this is by most men forgotten. The spirit of the Chaldean invader of whom the Prophet says, “This his strength is his God,” the *Dextra mihi Deus*, is in the heart, if not on the lips, of others besides the atheist.

1. A HOUSE, not “the Temple,” as some explain, nor “the family,” as others, but the structure itself, as is evident from the context. WATCHMAN, lit. “keeper,” *i.e.* by night, as in cxxi. 3, 4.

2. THAT YE RISE, or “who rise.” The Hebrew expression runs literally: “making early to rise, making late to sit (down).” It is an artificial lengthening of the natural day.

BREAD OF SORROWS, or perhaps rather “of wearisome efforts.” Comp. Prov. v. 10, “and thy wearisome efforts (*i.e.* what thou hast gotten with labour and toil) be in the house of a stranger.” There is an allusion, no doubt, to Gen. iii. 17, “in sorrow (or weariness) thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life.”

So; some interpret this HE GIVETH (IT) *i.e.* bread, the necessities of life,

\* There are coincidences of expression which have been supposed to justify this title, see Proverbs v. 10, xxiii. 30. The whole Psalm may be considered an expansion of Proverbs x. 22.

- 3 Behold, sons are a heritage from Jehovah,  
The fruit of the womb (His) reward.
- 4 Like arrows in the hand of a mighty man,  
So are the sons of (a man's) youth.
- 5 Happy is the man who hath filled his quiver with them,

IN SLEEP, but I am inclined to prefer the rendering, "So He giveth His beloved sleep," though it is no doubt difficult to explain the reference of the particle "so." I suppose it refers to the principle laid down in the previous verses, there being a tacit comparison, "as all labour is vain without God's providence, so He gives the man who loves Him and leaves all in His hands, calm refreshing sleep."

There is no discouragement here, it is needless to say, to honest labour. It is undue anxiety, a feverish straining, a toiling, as if toil of itself could command success, the folly of which is condemned. Comp. for a similar sentiment Prov. x. 22, "The blessing of Jehovah maketh rich, and toil can add nothing thereto." The teaching is that of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, "Wherefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink, neither for your body, wherewith ye shall be clothed," &c., Matt. vi. 25—34. See also Luke x. 41; 1 Pet. v. 7. God's "beloved" are not exempted from the great law of labour which lies upon all, but the sting is taken from it when they can leave all results in a Father's hand, with absolute trust in His wisdom and goodness.

3. BEHOLD, as drawing particular attention to one marked example of God's good gifts; which none can question is emphatically His *gift*; on this the Poet lingers, "allured by the charm of the subject," for such there was, especially to an Oriental, to whom a numerous progeny was the

first of blessings, giving value and stability to all others.

A HERITAGE, or perhaps here, in a wider sense, "a possession."

4. SONS OF YOUTH, *i.e.* sons of early married life (as in Prov. v. 18, "a wife of youth" is one married when a man is young). On the other hand, in Gen. xxxvii. 3, "a son of old age" is one born when his father is old.

These sons of a man's youth are particularly mentioned, because they would naturally grow up to be a support and protection to their father in his old age, when he would most need their support.

5. THEY. The pronoun may refer only to the father, though some think it includes both father and sons.

IN THE GATE, here mentioned chiefly as the place of judgement (Deut. xxi. 19; 1s. xxix. 21; Amos v. 12), as well as of all public acts. See on ix. 14. The allusion is to lawsuits, in which, if unjustly accused or brought before an unrighteous judge, a man need not fear lest he should be "put to shame," *i.e.* lose his cause; his stalwart sons would not suffer might to prevail against right.

The phrase, "speak with their enemies," in the sense of defending their cause, may be illustrated by Josh. xx. 4, "And he (the man-slayer who has fled) shall stand in the entrance of the gate of the city, and shall *speak his words* (*i.e.* plead his cause) in the ears of the elders of that city." Comp. 2 Sam. xix. 8; Jer. xii. 1.

Others understand by speaking with enemies in the gate a battle fought with besiegers at the gates. This

They shall not be ashamed, when they speak with  
their enemies in the gate.

certainly harmonizes better with the warlike figure of the quiver full of arrows; but can "to speak with enemies" mean to fight with them? If so, it must be an idiom something like that of "looking one another in the face," 2 Kings xiv. 8, II.

With the sentiment of ver. 4, 5, compare Soph. *Antig.* 641—644:

τούτου γὰρ οὐνεκ' ἄνδρες εὐχονται γονὰς  
κατηκύους φύσαντες ἐν δόμοις ἔχειν,

ὡς καὶ τὸν ἐχθρὸν ἀνταμύνονται κακοῖς,  
καὶ τὸν φίλον τιμῶσιν ἐξ ἴσου πατρί.

So, too, in Ecclus. xxx. 5, 6, it is said of a father that "while he lived, he saw and rejoiced in him (his son); and when he died, he was not sorrowful. He left behind him an avenger against his enemies, and one that shall requite kindness to his friends." The coincidence of expression in the last two passages is remarkable.

## PSALM CXXVIII.

THE Introduction to the preceding Psalm may be consulted on this, which is a sunny picture of the family happiness of one who fears God, and leads a holy life.

Luther calls this an "Epithalamium or Marriage Song, wherein the Prophet comforteth them that are married, wishing unto them and promising them from God all manner of blessings."

The Psalm consists of two parts:—

I. The description of the happy life. Ver. 1—4.

II. The good wishes and promises for him who has entered upon it. Ver. 5, 6.

[A PILGRIM SONG.]

- 1 HAPPY is every one that feareth Jehovah,  
That walketh in His ways.
- 2 For the labour of thy hands thou shalt eat,

2. THE LABOUR OF THY HANDS. —the quiet peaceful life of a thriving,  
This is the first part of the blessing, prosperous yeoman in the country,

- Happy art thou, and it (shall be) well with thee.  
 3 Thy wife (shall be) like a fruitful vine, in the inner part  
     of thy house ;  
     Thy children, like olive-plants, round about thy  
     table :  
 4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth  
     Jehovah.  
 5 Jehovah bless thee out of Zion,  
     And (mayest thou) look on the prosperity of  
     Jerusalem  
     All the days of thy life,  
 6 And see thy children's children.—  
     Peace be upon Israel.

with no fear that the harvest will be trodden down by the invader before it is ripe, or the cattle swept off by some roving predatory tribe. The opposite condition is threatened as a curse in the Law : "Ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it," Lev. xxvi. 16 ; "Thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein ; thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof," &c., Deut. xxviii. 30—33, 39, 40. See also Am. v. 11 ; Micah vi. 15 ; Eccles. vi. 1, 2 ; and for a contrast, in this respect, between the lot of the righteous and that of the wicked, Is. iii. 10, 11.

3. The comparison would perhaps be brought out more clearly by arranging the verse as follows :—

Thy wife shall be in the inner part of  
     thy house  
     Like a fruitful vine ;  
 Thy children round about thy table  
     Like the shoots of the olive.

IN THE INNER PART, lit. "the sides of thy house," as in Am. vi. 10, *i.e.* the women's apartments, as marking the proper sphere of the wife engaged in her domestic duties, and

also to some extent her seclusion, though this was far less among the Jews than among other Orientals.

The VINE is an emblem chiefly of *fruitfulness*, but perhaps also of *dependence*, as needing support ; the OLIVE of vigorous, healthy, joyous life. The same figure is employed by Euripides, *Herc. Fur.* 839, *Med.* 1,098.

5. Looking on the beautiful family picture, the Poet turns to greet the father of the household, and to wish him the blessing of which he has already spoken in such glowing terms.

OUT OF ZION, as the dwelling-place of God, His earthly throne and sanctuary, whence all blessing comes ; cxxxiv. 3, xx. 2.

Then follows the truly patriotic sentiment—the wish that he may see *the prosperity of Jerusalem*, as well as that he may live long to see his children and grandchildren. The welfare of the family and the welfare of the state are indissolubly connected.

(MAYEST THOU) LOOK, lit. "look thou."

6. CHILDREN'S CHILDREN. So Virgil : "Adspicies . . . natos natorum et qui nascentur ab illis."

## PSALM CXXIX.

THE nation, delivered from the Babylonish Captivity, may well look back to all her past history, and trace in it the same great law of suffering, and the same ever-repeated tokens of God's mercy. The record is a record of conflict, but it is also a record of victory (ver. 2). The great principle on which Israel's final deliverance rests is the *righteousness* of Jehovah (ver 4). That has been manifested, as often before, so now in cutting asunder the cords by which the people had been bound in Babylon. Full of thankfulness at this deliverance, the Poet draws thence an augury and a hope for the overthrow, complete and final, of their oppressors.

The Psalm consists, accordingly, of two stanzas, each of four verses ; the first containing the record of the past, the second the prayer (which is also a hope, and almost a promise) for the future.

In subject, style, and rhythmical structure, it most nearly resembles Psalm cxxiv.

## [A PILGRIM SONG.]

1 GREATLY have they fought against me, from my youth  
up—

May Israel now say—

2 Greatly have they fought against me, from my youth up,  
(But) they have not also prevailed against me.

1. GREATLY, or "long."

FOUGHT AGAINST ME, lit. "have been adversaries unto me."

FROM MY YOUTH UP. The youth of the nation was in Egypt, at which time God speaks of His relation to Israel as "love of youth," "espousals

of youth," &c. Hos. ii. 15 ; Jer. ii. 2, xxii. 21 ; Ezek. xxiii. 3.

2. HAVE NOT PREVAILED. This is the point of the Psalm. The New Testament parallel is 2 Cor. iv. 8—10, and the whole history of the Christian Church is an echo of the words.

- 3 (The) ploughers ploughed upon my back,  
They made long their furrows.
- 4 (But) Jehovah is righteous,  
He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.
- 5 Let them be ashamed and turned backward,  
As many as hate Zion.
- 6 Let them be as the grass on the housetops,  
That withereth afore it be plucked up :
- 7 Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand,  
Nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom ;
- 8 Neither do they which go by say,  
"The blessing of Jehovah be upon you."  
"We bless you in the name of Jehovah."

3. FURROWS. Deep wounds, such as those made by the lash on the back of slaves. Comp. Is. i. 6, and a different but not less expressive image, li 23.

4. THE CORDS. The figure probably is taken from the yoking of oxen : when the traces are cut, the bullock is free. Or "the cord" may be, in a wider sense, an image of slavery, as in ii. 3.

6. GRASS ON THE HOUSETOPS, easily springing up, but having no root. The flat roofs of the Eastern houses "are plastered with a composition of mortar, tar, ashes, and sand," in the crevices of which grass

often springs. The houses of the poor in the country were formed of a plaster of mud and straw, where the grass would grow still more freely : as all the images are taken from country life, it is doubtless to country dwellings that the Poet refers. Comp. 2 Kings xix. 26 ; Is. xxxvii. 27.

The picture of the harvest-field is like that in Ruth ii. 4, where in like manner we have the greeting and counter-greeting. "And behold Boaz came from Bethlehem and said unto the reapers, Jehovah be with you. And they answered him, Jehovah bless thee."

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PSALM CXXX.

THIS Psalm is a cry to God for the forgiveness of sin. The Psalmist pleads that he has long waited upon God, trusting in His word. Out of his own experience he exhorts all Israel in like manner

to hope, and wait, and look for God's mercy and redemption, which will assuredly be vouchsafed.

"When Luther, in the year 1530, was in the fortress of Coburg, on four occasions during the night there seemed to pass before his eyes burning torches, and this was followed by a severe headache. One night he saw three blazing torches come in at the window of his room, and he swooned away. His servant, coming to his assistance, poured oil of almonds into his ear and rubbed his feet with hot napkins. As soon as he recovered, he bade him read to him a portion of the Epistle to the Galatians, and during the reading fell asleep. The danger was over, and when he awoke, he cried out joyfully: 'Come, to spite the devil, let us sing the Psalm *De profundis*, in four parts.'

"Being asked on one occasion which were the best Psalms, he replied, 'The Pauline Psalms' (*Psalmi Paulini*), and being pressed to say which they were, he answered: 'The 32d, the 51st, the 130th, and the 143rd. For they teach us that the forgiveness of sins is vouchsafed to them that believe without the law and without works; therefore are they Pauline Psalms; and when David sings, "With Thee is forgiveness, that Thou mayest be feared," so Paul likewise saith, "God hath concluded all under sin, that He may have mercy on all." Therefore none can boast of his own righteousness, but the words, "That Thou mayest be feared," thrust away all self-merit, teach us to take off our hat before God and confess, *gratia est non meritum, remissio non satisfactio*, it is all forgiveness, and no merit.'" —*Delitzsch*.

This is the sixth of the seven Penitential Psalms, as they are called.

[A PILGRIM SONG.]

1 OUT of the depths have I called upon Thee, O Jehovah!

2 Lord, hear my voice:

Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

3 If Thou, O Jah, shouldest mark iniquities,  
O Lord, who shall stand?

1. OUT OF THE DEPTHS. Deep waters, as so often being an image of overwhelming affliction: comp. lxix. 2, 14; Is. li. 10.

3. MARK, lit. "keep," or "watch," so as to observe.

WHO SHALL (OR CAN) STAND? Comp. lxxvi. 7; Nah. i. 6; Mal. iii. 2.



- 4 But with Thee is forgiveness,  
That Thou mayest be feared.  
5 I have waited for Jehovah, my soul hath waited;  
And in His word have I hoped.  
6 My soul (looketh) for the Lord,

4. BUT, or rather FOR, the conjunction referring to what is *implied* in the previous verse. The sentiment expanded would be: "If Thou shouldest mark iniquities, none can stand; but Thou dost not mark them, *for* with Thee is forgiveness."

THAT THOU MAYEST BE FEARED. God freely forgives sin, not that men may think lightly of sin, but that they may magnify His grace and mercy in its forgiveness, and so give Him the fear and the honour due unto His Name. So in xxv. 11, the Psalmist prays, "For Thy Name's sake pardon mine iniquity;" and lxxix. 9, "Purge away our sins for Thy Name's sake," *i.e.* that God's Name may be glorified as a God who pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin. This forgiveness is a far more powerful motive than any other to call forth holy fear and love and self-sacrifice. Luther says: "Why doth he add, 'That Thou mayest be feared'? . . . It is as if he should say, I have learned by experience, O Lord, why there is mercy with Thee, and why of right Thou mayest challenge this title unto Thyself, that Thou art merciful and forgivest sins. For in that Thou shuttest all under free mercy, and leavest nothing to the merits and works of men, therefore Thou art feared. But if all things were not placed in Thy mercy, and we could take away oursins by our own strength, no man would fear Thee, but the whole world would proudly contemn Thee. For daily experience shows that where there is not this knowledge of God's mercy, there men walk in a presumption of their own

merits. . . . The true fear of God, the true worship, the true reverence, yea, the true knowledge of God resteth on nothing but mercy, that through Christ we assuredly trust that God is reconciled unto us. . . . Christian doctrine doth not deny or condemn good works, but it teacheth that God willeth not to mark iniquities, but willeth that we believe, that is, trust, His mercy. For with Him is forgiveness, that He may be feared and continue to be our God. Whoever, then, do believe that God is ready to forgive, and for Christ's sake to remit, sins, they render unto God true and reasonable service: they strive not with God about the law, works, and righteousness, but, laying aside all truth in themselves, do fear Him because of His mercy, and thus are made sons who receive the Holy Ghost, and begin truly to do the works of the law. So, in these two lines, David sets forth to us the sum and substance of all Christian doctrine, and that Sun which giveth light to the Church."

5. I HAVE WAITED. This has been the attitude of soul in which God's mercy has come to me.

IN HIS WORD, on the ground of His promises, I have claimed that mercy, and now my soul "is unto the Lord," that I may ever find fresh mercy, and grace for all my need. This waiting, hoping attitude is the attitude of a true heart, of one not easily discouraged, of one that says, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me."

6. MY SOUL (LOOKETH) FOR, *lit.* "my soul is unto the Lord" (as in

More than watchers (look) for the morning.  
 (I say, more than) watchers (look) for the morning.

- 7 Let Israel hope in Jehovah ;  
 For with Jehovah is loving-kindness,  
 And with Him is plenteous redemption.  
 8 And HE will redeem Israel  
 From all his iniquities.

cxliii. 2, "our eyes are unto Jehovah"), as the eyes of watchers through the long and weary night look eagerly for the first streaks of the coming day. Delitzsch quotes in illustration of the expression the words of Chr. A Crusius on his death-bed, when lifting up his eyes and hands to heaven he exclaimed: "My soul is full of the grace of Jesus Christ, *my whole soul is unto God.*"

WATCHERS, not merely "watchmen," as in cxlvii. 1, but all who, from whatever cause, are obliged to keep awake. No figure could more beautifully express the longing of the soul for the breaking of the day of God's loving mercy.

7. He has not been disappointed

of his hope, and therefore he can bid Israel hope.

PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION, or more literally, "redemption plenteously." He calls it plenteous, as Luther says, because such is the straitness of our heart, the slenderness of our hopes, the weakness of our faith, that it far exceeds all our capacity, all our petitions and desires.

8. HE emphatic, He alone, for none other can.

FROM HIS INIQUITIES, not merely from the punishment. The redemption includes the forgiveness of sins, the breaking of the power and dominion of sin, and the setting free from all the consequences of sin.

## PSALM CXXXI.

WHETHER written by David, to whom the title gives it, or not, this short Psalm, one of the most beautiful of the whole Book, assuredly breathes David's spirit. A childlike simplicity, an unaffected humility, the honest expression of that humility as from a heart spreading itself out in conscious integrity before God—this is what we find in the Psalm, traits of a character like that of David. Delitzsch calls the Psalm an echo of David's answer to Michal, 2 Sam. vi. 22, "And I will become of still less account than this, and I will be lowly in

mine own eyes." At the same time, with the majority of interpreters, he holds it to be a post-Exile Psalm, written with a view to encourage the writer himself and his people to the same humility, the same patient waiting upon God, of which David was so striking an example.

## [A PILGRIM SONG. OF DAVID.]

- 1 JEHOVAH, my heart is not haughty,  
 Nor mine eyes lifted up :  
 Neither have I exercised myself in things too great,  
 And in things too wonderful for me.  
 2 But I have stilled and hushed my soul,  
 As a child that is weaned of his mother ;

1. "All virtues together," it has been said, "are a body whereof humility is the head." It is this chief crowning virtue to which the Poet lays claim ; for "Jehovah hath respect unto the lowly," cxxxviii. 6, and "dwelleth with him that is of an humble spirit," Is. lvii. 15.

MINE EYES LIFTED UP, as in xviii. 27, ci. 6 ; therefore a Davidic expression. Pride has its seat in the heart, looks forth from the eyes, and expresses itself in the actions.

HAVE I EXERCISED MYSELF, lit. "walked," a common figure for the life and behaviour.

TOO GREAT . . . TOO WONDERFUL, here probably in a practical sense, "I have not aimed at a position above me, involving duties and responsibilities too heavy for me." Comp. for the phrase, Gen. xviii. 14, "Is anything too wonderful for Jehovah?" Deut. xvii. 8, "When a matter is too wonderful (too hard) for thee for judgement ;" xxx. 11, "For this commandment . . . is not too wonderful for thee, it is not far off."

2. I HAVE STILLLED MY SOUL, *i.e.* the pride and passions which were

like the swelling waves of an angry sea.

The two next clauses of the verse would be more exactly rendered :—

"As a weaned child *upon* h's mother" (*i.e.* as he lies resting upon his mother's bosom) ;

"As the weaned child (I say), lies my soul upon me."

The figure is beautifully expressive of the humility of a soul chastened by disappointment. As the weaned child no longer cries, and frets, and longs for the breast, but lies still and is content, because it is with its mother ; so my soul is weaned from all discontented thoughts, from all fretful desires for earthly good, waiting in stillness upon God, finding its satisfaction in His presence, resting peacefully in His arms.

"The weaned child," writes a mother, with reference to this passage, "has for the first time become *conscious of grief*. The piteous longing for the sweet nourishment of his life, the broken sob of disappointment, mark the trouble of his innocent

As the weaned child (I say) is my soul within me.

3 Let Israel hope in Jehovah,  
From henceforth even for ever.

heart: it is not so much the *bodily* suffering; he has felt that before, and cried while it lasted; but now his *joy and comfort are taken away*, and he knows not why. When his head is once more laid on his mother's bosom, then he trusts and loves and rests, but he has learned the first lesson of humility, he is cast down, and clings with fond helplessness to his one friend."

At a time when the devices of our modern civilization are fast tending

to obliterate the beauty of this figure, mothers no longer doing their duty by their children, it seems the more necessary to draw attention to it.

3. Prayer, as at the close of the last Psalm, that the experience of the individual may become the experience of the nation, that they too may learn to lie still, and trust, and wait, in that hope which, like faith and love, abideth for ever (1 Cor. xiii. 13).

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## PSALM CXXXII.

THIS Psalm is a prayer that God's promises made to David may not fail of fulfilment, that He will dwell for ever in the habitation which He chose for Himself in Zion, and that the children of David may for ever sit upon his throne. It opens with a recital of David's efforts to bring the Ark to its resting-place; it ends with a recital of the promises made to David and to his seed.

There has been much difference of opinion as to the occasion for which the Psalm was written.

1. The majority of the ancient interpreters regard it as a prayer of David's, either at the consecration of the Tabernacle after the removal of the Ark thither, or at the time when he formed the design of building the Temple, and received in consequence the promise in 2 Sam. vii., or at the dedication of Araunah's threshing-floor, 2 Sam. xxiv.

Others, with more probability, have thought that the Psalm was written in commemoration of the completion and dedication of the Temple, either by Solomon himself, or by some Poet of his time. On such a view. this ode is seen to be harmonious and consistent

throughout. It is perfectly natural that Solomon, or a Poet of his age writing a song for such an occasion, should recur to the earlier efforts made by his father to prepare a habitation for Jehovah. On the completion of the work, his thoughts would inevitably revert to all the steps which had led to its accomplishment. It is no less natural that at such a time the promise given to David should seem doubly precious, that it should be clothed with a new interest, a fresh significance, when David's son sat upon his throne, and when the auspicious opening of his reign might itself be hailed as a fulfilment of the promise. It is, moreover, in favour of this view that ver. 8—10 of the Psalm form, with one slight variation, the conclusion of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple, according to the version of that Prayer given in the Chronicles (2 Chron. vi. 41, 42).

## [A PILGRIM SONG.]

- 1 O JEHOVAH, remember for David  
All his anxious cares,
- 2 How he sware unto Jehovah,  
(And) vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob :
- 3 "I will not come into the tent of my house,  
I will not go up to the couch of my bed,

1. REMEMBER, *i.e.* so as to fulfil Thy promise made to him: comp. 2 Chron. vi. 42.

ALL HIS ANXIOUS CARES, lit. "all his being afflicted." David had *tormented* himself with his anxiety to prepare a suitable earthly dwelling-place for Jehovah. First, the building of the Tabernacle on Mount Zion, and the solemn bringing up of the Ark there, had engaged his thoughts. The prayer in ci. 2, "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" is the best comment on David's *afflictions* and *anxious cares* till his purpose was accomplished. In contrast with this, he says himself, "We did not seek it (did not trouble ourselves about it) in the day of Saul," 1 Chron. xiii. 3. Next, if we suppose the Psalm to

take a wider range, there may also be included in these "anxious cares" his earnest desire to build the Temple, and the great preparations which he made with that object, by collecting the materials, furnishing the design to his son, and making provision for the service and worship of God on a scale of unexampled magnificence.

2. HOW HE SWARE, lit. "who sware."

MIGHTY ONE OF JACOB. This name of God (repeated in ver. 5) occurs first in Gen. xlix. 24, in the mouth of the dying Jacob. It is found besides only in three passages: in Is. i. 24 ("Mighty One of Israel"), xlix. 26, lx. 16.

3. TENT OF MY HOUSE, *i.e.* "the tent which is my house" (as in the

- 4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes,  
 Nor slumber to my eyelids,  
 5 Until I find a place for Jehovah,  
 A dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob."  
 6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephrathah,

next clause, "the couch which is my bed"), a good instance of the way in which the associations of the old patriarchal tent life fixed themselves in the language of the people.

4. SLEEP TO MINE EYES. See the same proverbial expression, Prov. vi. 4.

5. A DWELLING. This has been referred to the placing the Ark in a *fixed* abode on Zion, after its many wanderings; comp. lxxviii. 68, 69. And this appears to me to be very probable.

6. This verse is extremely obscure, but it seems at any rate to describe in some way the accomplishment of David's purpose.

What are we to understand by Ephrathah and "the fields of the wood"?

(A) To take the latter expression first. This may be either an appellative or a proper name. In the last case it may be rendered, "fields of Jaar," *Jaar* being a shortened form of Kirjath-jearim, "the city of woods," for Jearim, "woods" is only the plural of Jaar, "wood."

(B) Ephrathah, as the name of a place, occurs elsewhere as the ancient name of Bethlehem, Gen. xxxv. 16, 19, xlviii. 7; Ruth iv. 11. In Micah v. 2, the two names are united, Bethlehem-Ephrathah.

Other explanations have been given of the name.

(a) Although *Ephrathah* is only an ancient name for Bethlehem, yet as Ephrathite as frequently denotes an Ephraimite as a Bethlehemite, so it is possible that Ephrathah here may be

a name for Ephraim. In that case, the allusion is to the first resting-place of the Ark in Shiloh, which was the capital of Ephraim: "We *heard* in ancient story that the Ark was placed in Shiloh; we *found* it, when at last it was to be removed to its new abode, at Kirjath-jearim." The word *found* would naturally suggest the many vicissitudes and wanderings of the Ark in the interval.

(B) It has been supposed that Ephrathah is not a proper name, but denotes, in accordance with its etymology, *the fruitful land*, by way of contrast with *the fields of the wood*, i.e. the forest district; and thus the whole land would be poetically summed up under the two heads of the fertile and the woody regions, and the meaning would be, "From all parts of the land we flocked at the summons of our king, to bring up the holy Ark to its dwelling-place in Zion." In this case, the verbs "heard" . . . "found" cannot be taken as describing different and contrasted acts, but as referring to one and the same event.

(γ) Ephrathah has been conjectured (also with reference to its etymological meaning of the "*fruitful country*") to be a name for Bethshemesh, the spot where the Ark was first deposited by the Philistines, and whence it was subsequently removed to "the fields of the wood," i.e. Kirjath-jearim. According to this interpretation, which is that of Hupfeld, the verse would mean,

- We found it in the field of the wood :
- 7 "Let us come into His dwelling,  
Let us bow ourselves before His footstool.
- 8 Arise, O Jehovah, into Thy resting-place,  
Thou, and the Ark of Thy strength.
- 9 Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness,  
And let Thy saints shout for joy."
- 10 For Thy servant David's sake,  
Turn not away the face of Thine Anointed.

"We heard that the Ark was brought  
to Bethshemesh first,  
We found it at Kirjath-jearim."

(δ) Lastly, Ephrathah has been identified with the district about Kirjath-jearim.

On the whole, whichever interpretation we adopt, the general scope of the passage seems to be : Remember Thy servant David, remember all his efforts to build Thee an habitation for Thy Name ; he gave himself no rest till he had brought the Ark to Zion. We heard where the Ark was, we went to fetch it, saying one to another as we brought it to its new abode, "Let us come into His dwelling," &c. And now, by the memory of David, by the memory of Thy covenant with him and his faithfulness to that covenant, we plead with Thee. Reject not the prayer of our king, who is David's son, grant him the request of his lips, fulfil all his desires. (Comp. xx. 1-4.)

7. HIS DWELLING, or "tabernacles," the house which David calls "curtains," 2 Sam. vii. 2, purposely repeated from ver. 5.

HIS FOOTSTOOL. See on xcix. 5.

8. As in ver. 7 we have the expression of the feelings of the congregation in David's time, so in ver. 8 there may be a transition to the language of the people in Solomon's

time. To the Poet's thoughts the congregation is one, and the utterance of their feelings is one. He blends together the song which was raised when the Ark was carried up to Zion, with the song which was raised when it was again moved from Zion to its final resting-place in the Temple. 2 Chron. v. 2-5, vi. 41.

ARISE. The words are taken from the old battle-cry of the nation, when the Ark set forward, "to search out a resting-place for them" (Numb. x. 33-36).

ARK OF THY STRENGTH. The only place in the Psalms where the Ark is mentioned. This designation occurs only here and in 2 Chron. vi. 41.

9. LET THY PRIESTS. The blessing of God's presence in its effects both upon the priests and the people.

RIGHTEOUSNESS. In the promise, ver. 16, which corresponds to this prayer, SALVATION is the equivalent word : see on lxxi. 15.

SAINTS or "beloved," as also in ver. 16. See on xvi. 10. From this verse are taken the petitions in our Liturgy : "Endue Thy ministers with righteousness. And make Thy chosen people joyful."

10. TURN NOT AWAY THE FACE, i.e. refuse not the prayer. See the same phrase 1 Kings ii. 16, 17, 20,

- 11 Jehovah hath sworn unto David,  
 It is truth, He will not depart from it,—  
 “Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.
- 12 If thy sons will keep My covenant,  
 And My testimonies which I shall teach them,  
 Their sons also for ever and ever  
 Shall sit upon thy throne.”
- 13 For Jehovah hath chosen Zion,  
 He hath desired it as an abode for Himself.
- 14 This is my resting-place for ever and ever,  
 Here will I abide, for I have desired it.
- 15 I will abundantly bless her provision,  
 I will satisfy her poor with bread.
- 16 Her priests will I clothe with salvation,  
 And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

where the E.V. renders “deny me not, say me not nay.”

THINE ANOINTED. This cannot be David. It would be extremely harsh to say, “For David’s sake refuse not the prayer of David.” Obviously the Anointed here must be Solomon (or some one of David’s descendants), who pleads David, and the promises made to David, as a reason why his prayer should not be rejected. In 2 Chron. vi. 42, the verse stands somewhat differently: “O Jehovah God, turn not away the face of Thine Anointed: remember the loving-kindnesses of David Thy servant.” The last clause most probably means, “Thy loving-kindnesses to David,” but others render “the goodness or piety of David Thy servant,” the meaning of the Hebrew word being ambiguous. The prayer is a prayer for the fulfilment of the promise. Hence the promise is quoted, ver. 11, 12. Others suppose that the subject of the prayer is to be found in ver. 8, 9.

11. HATH SWORN . . . WILL NOT DEPART, marking the unchangeable-

ness of the promise, as in cx. 4, “Jehovah hath sworn and will not repent.” Comp. lxxxix. 34—37. The substance of the promise follows, as given in 2 Sam. vii.

13. The choosing of Zion as the seat of the sanctuary is mentioned as being closely and intimately connected with the choosing of David as king, and the tribe of Judah as the ruling tribe. The connection is: Jehovah has given the sovereignty to David and to David’s house; *for* He has chosen Zion to be His own dwelling-place. The religious centre and political centre of the people are one and the same: exactly as in cxxii. 4, 5.

14. MY RESTING-PLACE. Shiloh had been abandoned; for a time the Ark was at Bethel, Jud. xx. 27; then at Mizpah, Jud. xxi. 5; afterwards, for twenty years, at Kirjath-jearim, 1 Sam. vii. 2; and then for three months in the house of Obed-Edom, before it was finally brought to its last resting-place.

16. A promise that the petition in ver. 9 shall be granted.



- 17 There will I make the horn of David to bud,  
I have prepared a lamp for mine Anointed.  
18 His enemies will I clothe with shame,  
But upon himself shall his crown shine.

17. MAKE THE HORN . . . TO BUD. Giving ever new strength to his house and victory over all enemies. See on lxxv. 5, and comp. Ezek. xxix. 21.

A LAMP. See on xviii. 28. Comp. 1 Kings xi. 36, "And unto his son

will I give one tribe, that David My servant may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen Me to put My Name there."

18. SHINE, lit. "blossom."

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PSALM CXXXIII.

HERDER says of this exquisite little song, that "it has the fragrance of a lovely rose." Nowhere has the nature of true unity—that unity which binds men together, not by artificial restraints, but as brethren of one heart—been more faithfully described, nowhere has it been so gracefully illustrated, as in this short ode. True concord is, we are here taught, a holy thing, a sacred oil, a rich perfume which, flowing down from the head to the beard, from the beard to the garment, sanctifies the whole body. It is a sweet morning dew, which lights not only on the lofty mountain-peaks, but on the lesser hills, embracing all, and refreshing all with its influence.

The title of the Psalm gives it to David. Hence it has been conjectured that it refers to the circumstances attending his coronation at Hebron, when, after eight years of civil war, "all the tribes of Israel," laying aside their mutual animosities, came to David into Hebron, and spake, saying, "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh" (2 Sam. v. 1). The picture of a united nation is given still more vividly in the narrative of the Chronicles (1 Chron. xii. 38—40).

Others have supposed that the Psalm was suggested by the sight of the multitudes who came up from all parts of Palestine to be present at the great national Feasts in Jerusalem.

Again, others, and perhaps the majority of commentators, refer the Psalm to the time of the return from the Captivity, when, there being no longer any division of the kingdom, the jealousies of the tribes had ceased, and all who returned, of whatever tribe, were incorporated in one state. That at this time there was a real unity of heart and mind in the nation, may be inferred from the narratives in Ezra and Nehemiah. Thus, for instance, we read in Ezra iii. 1, that "when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together *as one man* to Jerusalem." And in Nehem. viii. 1: "And all the people gathered themselves together *as one man* into the street that was before the Water Gate, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel."

But in truth there is not a syllable in the Psalm which can lead us to any conclusion respecting its date. Such a vision of the blessedness of unity may have charmed the Poet's heart and inspired the Poet's song at any period of the national history. And his words, though originally, no doubt, intended to apply to a state, would be equally true of a smaller circle, a family or a tribe.

[A PILGRIM SONG. OF DAVID.]

- 1 BEHOLD how good and how pleasant (it is)  
For brethren to dwell together (in unity).
- 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,

1. BEHOLD draws attention to an important truth. Augustine says of this first verse, that the very sound of it is so sweet that it was chanted even by persons who knew nothing of the rest of the Psalter. He also says that this verse gave birth to monasteries: it was like a trumpet-call to those who wished to dwell together as *brethren* (*fratres* or *friars*).

FOR BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER. The exact force of the Hebrew is, "for them who are brethren *also* to dwell together," *i.e.*

that those who are of one race and one stock should live in peace and harmony together as living members of the same body, filled with the same spirit, seeking, in mutual forbearance and sympathy, the same ends.

2. The first figure is taken from the oil which was poured on the head of the High Priest at his consecration (Ex. xxix. 7; Lev. viii. 12, xxi. 10). The point of the comparison does not lie in the *preciousness* of the oil, or in its *all-pervading fragrance*; but in this,

- Which descended upon the beard, (even) Aaron's beard,  
 Which descended to the edge of his garments;  
 3 Like the dew of Hermon which descended upon the  
     mountains of Zion,  
 For there Jehovah commanded the blessing,

that being poured on the head, it did not rest there, but flowed to the beard, and descended even to the garments, and thus, as it were, consecrated the whole body in all its parts. *All the members participate in the same blessing.* Comp. 1 Cor. xii. This is the point of the comparison. Other thoughts may be suggested by it, as that the spirit of concord, both in a state and in a family, will descend from those who govern to those who are governed; or again, that concord is a holy thing, like the holy oil, or that it is sweet and fragrant, like the fragrant oil; but these are mere accessories of the image, not that which suggested its use. If, as is commonly assumed, the point of comparison lay in the all-pervading fragrance of the oil, the addition to the figure, "which descended upon the beard . . . which descended to the edge of his garments," would be thrown away. But understand this as typifying the consecration of the whole man, and the extension of the figure at once becomes appropriate, and full of meaning.

THE PRECIOUS OIL, lit. "the good oil," i.e. the sacred oil, for the preparation of which special directions were given, and which was to be devoted exclusively to the consecration of holy things and persons, Ex. xxx. 22—33. Hence the image implies not only that the whole body is united, but that the whole body is consecrated.

AARON, named not because he only was thus anointed, but as the representative of all priestly anointing; see Ex. xxviii. 41, xxx. 30, xl. 15.

WHICH DESCENDED. I have followed the Hebrew in retaining the same word in the three successive lines. We have here, as in so many of the Pilgrim Songs, the repetition of the same word in connection with the same subject. See the repetition of the word "keep" in cxxi., and the same rhythmical figure in cxxiii. 3, 4, cxxiv. 1, 3, 4, &c.

EDGE, or rather "collar," lit. "mouth," "opening," as the mouth of a sack. The image does not represent the oil as descending to the skirts, the lower edge of the garment. It is enough that it touch the robe to sanctify it. According to the Law, the garments of the priests were sprinkled with the holy oil, Ex. xxix. 21; Lev. viii. 30.

3. The second image expressive of the blessing of brotherly concord, is taken from the dew. Here again it is not the *refreshing* nature of the dew, nor its *gentle, all-pervading* influence, which is the prominent feature. That which renders it to the Poet's eye so striking an image of brotherly concord, is the fact that *it falls alike on both mountains*: that the same dew which descends on the lofty Hermon descends also on the humbler Zion. High and low drink in the same sweet refreshment. Thus the image is exactly parallel to the last; the oil descends from the head to the beard, the dew from the higher mountain to the lower. (Hermon in the north, and Zion in the south, may also further suggest the union of the northern and southern tribes.)

THERE. In Zion the blessed fruits

(Even) life for evermore.

of this brotherly concord may chiefly be looked for, for Jehovah Himself has made it the great centre of all blessing and all life.

This last verse lends some colour to the view that the Psalm was intended to be sung at the gathering of the tribes for the great national Feasts. Comp. cxxviii. 5, cxxxiv. 3.

The similitude of the dew has taken shape in a legend.

An old pilgrim narrates, that every morning at sunrise a handful of dew floated down from the summit of Hermon, and deposited itself upon the church of St. Mary, where it was immediately gathered up by Christian leeches, and was found a sovereign remedy for all diseases: it was of this dew, he declares, that David spoke prophetically in this Psalm.—*Itinerary of St. Anthony.*

## PSALM CXXXIV.

“THREE things are clear with regard to this Psalm,” says Delitzsch. “First, that it consists of a greeting, ver. 1, 2, and a reply, ver. 3. Next, that the greeting is addressed to those Priests and Levites who had the night-watch in the Temple. Lastly, that this Psalm is purposely placed at the end of the collection of Pilgrim Songs in order to take the place of a final blessing.”

That the address is not to any person in the habit of frequenting the Temple is evident, because it was only in rare and exceptional cases (Luke ii. 37) that such persons could be found in the Temple at night. And, further, the word “stand” in ver. 1 is the common word to express the service of the Priests and Levites, who had their duties by night as well as by day (1 Chron. ix. 33).

The Targum, too, explains the first verse of the Temple watch:

“The custom in the Second Temple appears to have been this. After midnight the chief of the door-keepers took the key of the inner Temple, and went with some of the Priests through the small postern of the Fire Gate. In the inner court this watch divided itself into two companies, each carrying a burning torch; one company turned west, the other east, and so they compassed the court to see whether all were in readiness for the Temple service on the following morning. In the bakehouse, where the *Mincha* (‘meat-offering’) of the High

Priest was baked, they met with the cry, 'All well.' Meanwhile the rest of the Priests arose, bathed themselves, and put on their garments. They then went into the stone chamber (one-half of which was the hall of session of the Sanhedrim), and there, under the superintendence of the officer who gave the watch-word, and one of the Sanhedrim, surrounded by the Priests clad in their robes of office, their several duties for the coming day were assigned to each of the Priests by lot (Luke i. 9)."

Accordingly it has been supposed by Tholuck and others that the greeting in ver. 1, 2, was addressed to the guard going off duty by those who came to relieve them; and who in their turn received the answer in ver. 3. Others conjecture that the greeting was interchanged between the two companies of the night-watch, when they met in making their rounds through the Temple. Delitzsch, however, thinks that the words of ver. 1, 2, are addressed by the congregation to the Priests and Levites who had charge of the night-service, and that ver. 3 is an answer of blessing from them to the congregation who were gathered on the Temple-mountain.

[A PILGRIM SONG.]

*(The Greeting).*

- 1 BEHOLD, bless ye Jehovah, all ye servants of Jehovah,  
Which by night stand in the house of Jehovah.
- 2 Lift up your hands to the sanctuary,  
And bless ye Jehovah.

*(The Answer).*

- 3 Jehovah bless thee out of Zion,

**I. BEHOLD.** The word draws attention here to a duty, as at the beginning of the last Psalm it drew attention to a truth at once important and attractive.

**SERVANTS OF JEHOVAH.** The expression of itself might denote the people at large, but the next clause limits it (as in cxxxv. 2) to the Priests and Levites.

**BY NIGHT.** Lit. "in the nights." See reference to a night-service in 1 Chr. ix. 33.

**STAND.** A common word for the service of the Priests and Levites, Deut. x. 8; 1 Chr. xiii. 30; 2 Chr. xxix. 11.

**3. BLESS THEE.** The singular instead of the plural "bless you," because the words are taken from

(Even He who is) the Maker of heaven and earth.

the form used by the High Priest in blessing the people, Num. vi. 24.

MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.  
As in cxxi. 2, cxxiv. 8.

OUT OF ZION. See on cxxxv. 21.

## PSALM CXXXV.

A PSALM intended for the Temple service, and one of the Hallelujah Psalms, though not placed in the same series with the rest. It is, like Ps. cxxxiv., an exhortation to the Priests and Levites who wait in the sanctuary to praise Jehovah, both because of His goodness in choosing Israel to be His people, and because of His greatness and the Almighty power which He has shown in His dominion over the world of nature, and in the overthrow of all the enemies of His people. Then His abiding Majesty is contrasted with the nothingness of the idols of the heathen. The Psalm is almost entirely composed of passages taken from other sources. Compare ver. 1 with cxxxiv. 1; ver. 3 with cxlvii. 1; ver. 6 and 15—20 with cxv.; ver. 7 with Jer. x. 13; ver. 14 with Deut. xxxii. 36; ver. 8—12 with cxxxvi. 10—22.

Delitzsch not inaptly describes the Psalm, on this account, as a species of mosaic, applying to its structure the expression of the old Roman poet Lucilius: "Quam lepide lexeis compostæ ut tessellæ omnes." The prophecies of Jeremiah furnish many instances of a similar composite diction. Zephaniah takes his words and phrases almost entirely from Jeremiah. Many sentences in the Book of Proverbs would naturally appear in other writers, and a collector of proverbial wisdom must by the very nature of the case compose a mosaic instead of painting a picture. Several of the Psalms are specimens of this composite work. The diction of the 97th and 98th Psalms in particular is a series of coloured fragments, as it were, from the later chapters of Isaiah. The *tessellæ* of this Psalm, on the other hand, are gathered from the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa.

## HALLELUJAH!

- 1 Praise ye the Name of Jehovah,  
Praise (it), O ye servants of Jehovah.
- 2 Ye that stand in the house of Jehovah,  
In the courts of the house of our God,
- 3 Praise ye Jah, for Jehovah is good ;  
Sing Psalms unto His Name, for it is lovely.
- 4 For Jah hath chosen Jacob to Himself,  
Israel for His peculiar treasure.
- 5 For I know that Jehovah is great,  
And that our Lord is above all gods.
- 6 All that Jehovah pleaseth He hath done,  
In heaven and in earth,  
In the seas and in all deeps.

1. The opening of the Psalm resembles the opening of cxxxiv.

2. IN THE COURTS. See on lxxxiv.

2. The mention of these "courts" is no evidence that the exhortation is addressed not merely to the Priests, but to the people. Nor can this be inferred from the formula in ver. 19, 20, which is common to these liturgical Psalms; comp. cxv. 9—11. The address is, as in cxxxiv. 1, to the Levites who sang Psalms and played on the different musical instruments which were used in the service of God, and to the Priests who blew with the trumpets and repeated the liturgical prayers and the blessings.

The thrice-repeated Jehovah, followed by Jah—Jehovah—Jah, may have a reference to the form of the priestly blessing in which they "put the Name of Jehovah upon the children of Israel," Num. vi. 22—27. Thrice the priests uttered the Name; thrice, and yet thrice again, the congregation echoed it back in their song.

3. IT IS LOVELY. According to the parallelism, this will refer either to the Name of Jehovah, or to Jehovah Himself, "for *He* is lovely." But according to the analogy of cxlvii. 1 (comp. Prov. xxiii. 8) the subject is the song: "for it is pleasant, viz. thus to sing praise."

4. Then follow the several grounds of this praise. First, because He has chosen Israel. Next, because He is higher than all the gods of the heathen, as He has shown in His absolute supremacy over the world of nature, ver. 5—7. Then, because He redeemed His people from Egypt, ver. 8. 9. Lastly, because, vanquishing all their enemies, He gave them the Promised Land, ver. 10—12.

5. I KNOW. The pron. is emphatic, and the phrase marks a strong personal conviction (sometimes, as in xx. 6, one newly gained).

6. ALL THAT HE PLEASETH. This absolute supremacy of God over all the forces and phenomena of the natural world is stated in the same

- 7 He bringeth up vapours from the end of the earth,  
 He hath made lightnings for the rain.  
 He sendeth forth the wind out of His treasures.
- 8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt,  
 Both of man and beast :
- 9 (Who) sent signs and wonders into the midst of thee,  
 O Egypt,  
 Upon Pharaoh and upon all his servants ;
- 10 Who smote many nations,  
 And slew mighty kings.
- 11 Sihon, king of the Amorites,  
 And Og, the king of Bashan,  
 And all the kingdoms of Canaan ;
- 12 And gave their land as an heritage,  
 An heritage unto Israel His people.
- 13 O Jehovah, Thy name (endureth) for ever,  
 Thy memorial, O Jehovah, to all generations.
- 14 For Jehovah judgeth His people,  
 And repenteth Himself concerning His servants.
- 15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold,  
 The work of men's hands.
- 16 They have a mouth, and speak not ;  
 Eyes have they, and see not.

way as in cxv. 3, with reference more particularly to the weakness of the gods of the nations, as also in this Psalm, ver. 15—18.

7. The verse occurs almost word for word in Jer. x. 13, li. 16.

VAPOURS, or perhaps "clouds" as formed of masses of vapour.

FROM THE END OF THE EARTH, *i.e.* either from the horizon on which they seem to gather, or from the sea ; or perhaps, as Augustine says, because "unde surrexerint nescis."

FOR THE RAIN, *i.e.* to accompany the rain.

HIS TREASURES. Comp. Job xxxviii. 22.

8. BOTH OF MAN AND BEAST ;

lit. "from man unto beast."

13. Comp. Exod. iii. 15.

14. Borrowed from Deut. xxxii.

36. Comp. for the second clause of the verse Ps. xc. 13.

FOR. Here is the proof and evidence that Jehovah's Name and memorial abide for ever ; that He will manifest, as in the past, so in the future, His righteousness and His mercy to Israel.

JUDGETH, *i.e.* see that they have right, which is in fact the consequence of His "repenting concerning," or "having compassion of," His servants.

15—18. Borrowed with some variation from cxv. 4—8.



- 17 They have ears, and (yet) they hear not,  
     Yea, they have no breath at all in their mouths.  
 18 They that make them shall be like unto them,  
     Every one that putteth his trust in them.  
 19 O house of Israel, bless ye Jehovah :  
     O house of Aaron, bless ye Jehovah :  
 20 O house of Levi, bless ye Jehovah :  
     Ye that fear Jehovah, bless ye Jehovah.  
 21 Blessed be Jehovah out of Zion,  
     (Who) dwelleth in Jerusalem.

Hallelujah !

19, 20. Precisely as in cxv. 9—11, cxviii. 2—4, only that here "the house of Levi" is added.

21. As in cxxviii. 5, cxxxiv. 3, Jehovah blesses out of Zion, so here, on the other hand, His people bless

Him out of Zion. For there they meet to worship Him; there not only He, but they, may be said to dwell (Is. x. 24); and thence accordingly His praise is sounded abroad.

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## PSALM CXXXVI.

THIS Psalm is little more than a variation and repetition of the preceding Psalm. It opens with the same liturgical formula with which the 106th and 118th Psalms open, and was evidently designed to be sung antiphonally in the Temple worship. Its structure is peculiar. The first line of each verse pursues the theme of the Psalm, the second line, "For His loving-kindness endureth for ever," being a kind of refrain or response, like the responses, for instance, in our Litany, breaking in upon and yet sustaining the theme of the Psalm; the first would be sung by some of the Levites, the second by the choir as a body, or by the whole congregation together with the Levites. We have an example of a similar antiphonal arrangement in the first four verses of the 118th Psalm; but there is no

other instance in which it is pursued throughout the Psalm. The nearest approach to the same constant repetition is in the "Amen" of the people to the curses of the Law as pronounced by the Levites, Deut. xxvii. 14.

In the Jewish liturgy this Psalm, with its twenty-six responses, is called "the Great Hallel," by way of distinction from "the Hallel," simply so called, which comprises Psalms exiii.—cxviii., though there is some uncertainty as to the former designation; for according to some "the Great Hallel" comprises cxxxv. 4—cxxxvi., and according to others, cxx.—cxxxvi.

According to an old rule of writing observed in some of the most ancient MSS., the two lines of the verses ought to be arranged each in a separate column, or, as the phrase runs, "half-brick upon half-brick, brick upon brick."

It may be observed that the verses are grouped in threes as far as ver. 18, and then the Psalm concludes with two groups of four verses each. It is possible that ver. 19—22 did not originally belong to this Psalm, being introduced from the previous Psalm, and that there were thus, in the first instance, 22 lines, corresponding to the number of letters in the Hebrew Alphabet.\*

- 1 O GIVE thanks unto Jehovah, for He is good,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 2 O give thanks unto the God of gods,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.

2, 3. GOD OF GODS . . . LORD OF LORDS, from Deut. x. 17.

\* "One February night, A.D. 358, the great church at Alexandria was bright with lights far into the night, and still the congregation did not disperse. The Bishop Athanasius was there, and the service was to be prolonged till morning, for next day the Holy Communion was to be celebrated, and it was the frequent custom among the early Christians to spend the preceding night in prayer and singing hymns. All knew that further troubles were hanging over their beloved Bishop, and that the time of his presence with them would probably be very short. Suddenly a clashing noise broke the stillness—the church was surrounded by armed men—with calm presence of mind Athanasius rose and gave out the 136th Psalm, which has to every verse the response 'For His mercy, &c.' The whole congregation joined in thundering forth those grand words, when the doors burst open, and the imperial envoy at the head of a body of soldiers walked up the aisle. For a moment, the soldiers drew back in awe at the solemn sound of the chanting, but again they pressed on, and a shower of arrows flew through the church. Swords flashed, arms rattled, and rough shouts interrupted the music. Athanasius retained his seat till the congregation had dispersed. Then he too disappeared in the darkness, and no one knew where he was gone. He found a refuge among his old friends the Hermits of Egypt."

- 3 O give thanks unto the Lord of lords,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 4 To Him who alone doeth great wonders,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 5 To Him who in wisdom made the heavens,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 6 To Him that stretched out the earth, above the waters,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 7 To Him who made great lights,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 8 The sun to rule the day,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 9 The moon and (the) stars to rule the night,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 10 To Him who smote Egypt in their first-born,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 11 And brought forth Israel from the midst of them,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 12 With a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 13 To him who divided the Red Sea into parts,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 15 And overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 16 To Him who led His people through the wilderness,  
     For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.

5. IN WISDOM. Comp. civ. 24; Prov. iii. 19; Jer. x. 12.

6. STRETCHED OUT; from the same root as the word *firmament* or expanse in Gen. i. Comp. Is. xlii. 5, xliv. 24.

ABOVE THE WATERS. Comp. xxiv. 2.

7. LIGHTS. The word is employed here strictly, instead of the corresponding word in Gen. i. 14—

16, which means not *Lights*, but *luminaries*; the bodies, that is, which hold the light.

9. TO RULE, lit. "for dominions over;" the plural, poetically, instead of the singular, as in the preceding verse, and in Gen. i.

10—22. Almost word for word as in cxxv. 8—12.

15. OVERTHREW, lit. "shook out," as in Ex. xiv. 27.

- 17 To Him who smote great kings,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 18 And slew mighty kings,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 19 Sihon king of the Amorites,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 20 And Og the king of Bashan,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 21 And gave their land for an heritage,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 22 An heritage unto Israel His servant,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 23 Who remembered us in our low estate,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 24 And rescued us from our adversaries,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 25 (Who) giveth food to all flesh,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
- 26 O give thanks to the God of heaven,  
For His loving-kindness (endureth) for ever.
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## PSALM CXXXVII.

THERE can be no doubt whatever as to the time when this Psalm was written. It expresses the feelings of an exile who has but just returned from the land of his captivity. In all probability the writer was a Levite, who had been carried away by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem was sacked and the Temple destroyed, and who was one of the first, as soon as the edict of Cyrus was published,

to return to Jerusalem. He is again in his own land. He sees again the old familiar scenes. The mountains and the valleys that his foot trod in youth are before him. The great landmarks are the same, and yet the change is terrible. The spoiler has been in his home, his vines and his fig-trees have been cut down, the House of his God is a heap of ruins. His heart is heavy with a sense of desolation and bitter with the memory of wrong and insult from which he has but lately escaped.

He takes his harp, the companion of his exile, the cherished relic of happier days,—the harp which he could not string at the bidding of his conquerors by the waters of Babylon ; and now with faltering hand he sweeps the strings, first in low, plaintive, melancholy cadence pouring out his griefs, and then with a loud crash of wild and stormy music, answering to the wild and stormy numbers of his verse, he raises the pæan of vengeance over his foes.

He begins by telling in language of pathetic beauty the tale of his captivity. He draws first the picture of the land—so unlike his own mountain land—the broad plain watered by the Euphrates and intersected by its canals, their banks fringed with willows, with no purple peak, no deep, cool glen to break the vast, weary, monotonous expanse ; and then he draws the figure of the captives in their deep despondency, a despondency so deep that it could find no solace even in those sacred melodies which were dear to them as life—"As for our harps, we hanged them upon the willows by the water-side." Next, his verse tells of the mocking taunt of their captors, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion ;" and the half-sad, half-proud answer of the heart, strong in its faith and unconquerable in its patriotism, "How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a strange land ?" It were a profanation, it were a treachery. Sooner let the tongue fail to sing than sing to make the heathen mirth ; sooner let the hand lose her cunning than tune the harp to please the stranger.

No wonder that then, brooding over the memory of the past, brooding over his wrongs, and seeing around him in blackened ruins and wasted fields the footsteps of the invader, the Poet should utter his wrath. No wonder that the Psalm concludes with that fierce outburst of natural resentment, a resentment which borrows almost a grandeur from the religious fervour, the devoted patriotism, whence it springs. Terrible have been the wrongs of Jerusalem : let the revenge be terrible. Woe to those who in the day of her fall took part with her enemies and rejoiced in her overthrow, when they ought

rather to have come to her aid. Woe to the proud oppressors who have so long held her children captive, and made their hearts bitter with insult and wrong. "Blessed shall he be who taketh thy little ones, and dasheth them against the rock."

What a wonderful mixture is the Psalm of soft melancholy and fiery patriotism! The hand which wrote it must have known how to smite sharply with the sword, as well as how to tune the harp. The words are burning words of a heart breathing undying love to his country, undying hate to his foe. The Poet is indeed

"Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,  
The love of love." \*

- 1 BY the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept  
When we remembered Zion.
- 2 Upon the willows in the midst thereof  
We hanged up our harps.
- 3 For there they that led us away captive asked of us a song,  
And they that spoiled us (required of us) mirth,  
(Saying) "Sing us one of the songs of Zion."
- 4 How should we sing Jehovah's song  
In a strange land?

4, 5. How sing a *holy* song on a strange, *profane* soil? How sing a song of *joy* when the city and Temple of our God lay in ruins? Compare the words of Nehemiah, "Where-

fore the King said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? And I said, Let the King live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad when the city, the

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\* St. Vincent de Paul was taken captive by pirates, and sold at Tunis as a slave to the Turks. By one of these he was again sold to a renegade nobleman from Nice, now living in the country, with his three wives, as a Mohamedan. St. Vincent de Paul worked in his garden, and one of the Turkish ladies, who was fond of talking with him, one day ordered him to sing one of his hymns to his God. With tears in his eyes he sang the Psalm of the Captivity, "By the waters of Babylon." The lady was so touched by the song and by all he told her of his faith, that in the evening she rebuked her husband for his apostasy. He was filled with remorse and anxiety for his soul's safety, and after much converse with his slave resolved to return to Christendom and the gospel. After ten months he made his escape, taking Vincent with him, and when they arrived safely in France, the penitent was publicly re-admitted into the Church, at Avignon.—*Stories of Success*, S.P.C.K.

- 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,  
 Let my right hand forget (her cunning).  
 6 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth  
 If I remember thee not ;  
 If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy.  
 7 Remember, O Jehovah, the children of Edom  
 (In) the day of Jerusalem,  
 Who said, Rase it, Rase it, even to the foundation  
 thereof.  
 8 O daughter of Babylon that shalt be destroyed,  
 Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee  
 As thou hast served us.  
 9 Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little  
 ones  
 Against the rock.

place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" (Neh. ii. 2, 3.)

5. FORGET. Probably there is an aposiopesis ; or we may supply either, as the E. V., "her cunning," *i.e.* her skill with the harp, or more generally, "the power of motion."

7. As he broods over his wrongs, as he looks upon the desolation of his country, as he remembers with peculiar bitterness how they who ought to have been allies took part with the enemies of Jerusalem in the fatal day of her overthrow, there bursts forth the terrible cry for vengeance ; vengeance first on the false kindred, and next on the proud conquerors of his race. Lam. iv. 21, 22 ; Ezek. xxv. 8, 12—14 ; Obad. 1—21 ; Jer. xlix. 7—22 ; Is. lxiii. 1—4.

8. THAT SHALT BE DESTROYED, or perhaps, "doomed to destruction." Others, "that are laid waste,"

as if referring to the taking of Babylon by Cyrus. Compare for the sentiment, Jer. li. 56, "Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken ; for Jehovah is a God of recompenses, He shall surely requite." See also for the same principle of *retribution* in the overthrow of Babylon, Is. xlvii. 1—9.

9 LITTLE ONES, lit. "sucklings." With such barbarous cruelty wars were carried on, even by comparatively civilized nations. Comp. for Biblical examples 2 Kings viii. 12, xv. 16 ; Is. xiii. 16 ; Hos. x. 14, xiii. 10 ; Nah. iii. 10. So Homer, painting the sack of a city, mentions as one of its features, *νήπια τέκνα βαλλόμενα πορὶ γαίῃ*. And again, Andromache addressing her child says, *σὺ δ' οὐ τέκος ἦ ἐμοὶ αὐτῇ . . . ἔλπει . . . ἢ τις Ἀχαιῶν ῥίψει, χεῖρὶς ἐλὼν ἀπὸ πύργου, λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον*.

## PSALM CXXXVIII.

ACCORDING to the Hebrew title, this is a Psalm of David. So far as the Psalm itself is concerned, we have no clue to guide us ; neither the language nor the allusions will warrant any conclusion as to date or authorship. The mention of the Temple in ver. 2 does not prove that the Psalm was not written by David, for the word rendered "Temple" might be used of a structure like the Tabernacle (see on ver. 7). Nor does the hope or prophecy concerning the kings of the earth in ver. 4 necessarily point to a post-Exile time, for hopes of a similar kind are found also in earlier Psalms (see note on that verse).

The Psalm consists of three strophes :—

(1) In the first the Poet encourages himself to praise God both because of His goodness and faithfulness and His great promises, and also because he himself had had his prayers answered. Ver. 1—3.

(2) He utters the hope, the prophecy, that the kings of the earth shall acknowledge the greatness of Jehovah,—His greatness chiefly in this, that He does not measure by any human standard of great and small, of high and low. Ver. 4—6.

(3) He applies all that he has learnt of Jehovah's character to his own individual experience in prospect of trouble and danger Ver. 7, 8.

[(A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

I I WILL give thanks unto Thee with my whole heart,  
Before the gods will I sing praise unto Thee :

I. UNTO THEE. The Being who is addressed is not named till ver. 4. It is as though in the Psalmist's heart there could be but one object of praise, whether named or unnamed.

BEFORE THE GODS. This has been variously explained. The LXX.,

who are followed by Luther, Calvin, and others, understand it of the *angels*. But, though the angels are called upon to praise God, they are nowhere in the O. T. regarded as witnesses of or sharers in the worship of men. It is far more probable that



- 2 I will bow myself before Thy holy Temple,  
 And I will give thanks to Thy Name, because of  
 Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth,  
 For Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy  
 Name.
- 3 In the day that I called, Thou answeredst me,  
 Thou madest me courageous with strength in my  
 soul.
- 4 All the kings of the earth shall give thanks unto Thee,  
 O Jehovah ;  
 For they have heard the words of Thy mouth.
- 5 And they shall sing of the ways of Jehovah ;  
 For great is the glory of Jehovah.
- 6 For (though) Jehovah is high, yet He seeth the humble ;  
 And the proud He knoweth afar off.

“the gods” are the false gods, the objects of heathen worship, in the very presence of whom, and to the confusion of their worshipers, the Psalmist will utter his praise of the true God. See xcv. 3, xcvi. 4, 5, cxv. 3—8.

2. **THY WORD**, or “promise.” Comp. lvi. 10, lx. 6, lxii. 11. No particular promise is meant.

**ABOVE ALL THY NAME.** The expression seems to mean that to the soul waiting upon God, and trusting in His word, the promise becomes so precious, so strong a ground of hope, that it surpasses all other manifestations of God’s goodness and truth ; or in the promise may here also be included the fulfilment of the promise.

4. **ALL THE KINGS OF THE EARTH.** See the expression of the same feeling in lxviii. 29—32, lxii. 10, 11, cii. 15.

**FOR THEY HAVE HEARD.** This sounds in the Old Testament almost like an anticipation of St. Paul’s words: “But I say have they not heard? Yea verily, their sound is gone forth into all the world.” It

is to be explained by the deep conviction in the Psalmist’s heart that *God’s* words cannot be hidden, must be published abroad. Others, however, render, “When they (shall) have heard.”

**SING OF THE WAYS.** Having heard the tidings, “the words of God’s mouth,” they will joyfully celebrate His mighty acts. Comp. ciii. 7, where “His ways” correspond to “His acts” in the parallelism.

6. **IS HIGH.** Comp. cxiii. 5, 6. **HE KNOWETH AFAR OFF.** This is the only proper rendering of the clause ; but the expression is somewhat remarkable. (1) It has been explained by reference to cxxxix. 2 (“Thou understandest my thoughts afar off”), which would mean, God knows (observes) the proud, distant as they may think themselves to be from His control. (2) But it seems rather to mean, God knows them (regards them) only at a distance, does not admit them into His fellowship ; He does not “see” them

7 If I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt quicken me :

Against the wrath of mine enemies Thou wilt stretch out Thine hand,

And Thy right hand shall save me.

8 Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me ;

Jehovah, Thy loving-kindness (endureth) for ever :

Forsake not the works of Thy hands.

as He "seeth the humble." (3) Or it would be possible to explain, He knows them *so as to keep them* at a distance.

7. IF I WALK. Compare xxiii. 4, and lxxi. 20.

8. PERFECT, *i.e.* accomplish the

work He has begun. See the same word in lvii. 2, and comp. the ἐπιτελεῖν of Phil. i. 6.\*

FORSAKE NOT, or "relax not," turning into a prayer what he had just before expressed as a conviction of his own mind.

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## PSALM CXXXIX.

NOWHERE are the great attributes of God—His Omniscience, His Omnipresence, His Omnipotence—set forth so strikingly as they are in this magnificent Psalm. Nowhere is there a more overwhelming sense of the fact that man is beset and compassed about by God, pervaded by His Spirit, unable to take a step without His control ; and yet nowhere is there a more emphatic assertion of the personality of man as distinct from, not absorbed in, the Deity. This is no pantheistic speculation. Man is here the workmanship of God, and stands in the presence and under the eye of One who is his Judge. The power of conscience, the sense of sin and of responsibility, are felt and acknowledged, and prayer is offered to One who is not only the Judge, but the Friend ; One who is feared as none else are feared ; One who is loved as none else are loved.

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\* This verse was Bishop Andrewes' favourite ejaculatory prayer. See Liddon, *Some Elements of Religion*, Lecture iii., p. 105.

Both in loftiness of thought and in expressive beauty of language the Psalm stands pre-eminent, and it is not surprising that Aben Ezra should have pronounced it to be "the crown of all the Psalms."

The Psalm is anonymous in the Hebrew, but it is probable that it was written after the Exile.

The rhythmical structure is, on the whole, regular. There are four strophes, each consisting of six verses; the first three strophes containing the proper theme of the Psalm, and the last the expression of individual feeling.

I. In the first strophe the Poet dwells on the omniscience of God as manifested in His knowledge of the deepest thoughts and most secret workings of the human heart. Ver. 1—6.

II. In the second, on His omnipresence; inasmuch as there is no corner of the universe so remote that it is not pervaded by God's presence, no darkness so deep that it can hide from His eye. Ver. 7—12.

III. The third strophe gives the reason for the profound conviction of these truths, of which the Poet's heart is full. No wonder that God should have so intimate a knowledge of man, for man is the creature of God: the mysterious beginnings of life, which none can trace; the days, all of which are ordered before the first breath is drawn,—these are fashioned and ordered by the hand of God. Ver. 13—18.

IV. In the last strophe the Psalmist turns abruptly aside to express his utter abhorrence of wicked men—an abhorrence, no doubt, deepened by his previous meditation on God and His attributes, and called forth probably by the circumstances in which he was placed; and then closes with a prayer that he himself may, in his inmost heart, be right with that God who has searched him and known him and laid His hand upon him, and that he may be led by Him in the way everlasting. Ver. 19—24.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 O JEHOVAH, Thou hast searched me, and known (me).
- 2 THOU knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,  
Thou understandest my thought afar off.

- 3 Thou hast searched my path and my bed,  
And Thou art acquainted with all my ways.  
4 For before a word is yet on my tongue,  
Lo, O Jehovah, Thou knowest it altogether.  
5 Behind and before hast Thou beset me,  
And laid Thine hand upon me.  
6 (Such) knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
It is too high, I cannot attain unto it.
- 7 Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit ?  
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence ?  
8 If I climb up into heaven, THOU art there,  
And if I make my bed in hell, lo, Thou art there.  
9 (If) I take the wings of the morning,  
(If) I dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
10 Even there shall Thy hand lead me,  
And Thy right hand shall hold me.  
11 And should I say : Only let darkness cover me,  
And the light about me be night !

3. THOU HAST SEARCHED, lit. "Thou hast winnowed," or "sifted."

5. BESET ME, or "shut me in." Comp. Job iii. 23, xiii. 27, xiv. 5, 13, 16, xix. 8.

LAI D THINE HAND. Job xiii. 21, xxxiii. 7. Therefore, in the utmost exercise of his freedom, man is only accomplishing what God's counsel and foreknowledge have determined.

With the general sentiment of the first strophe compare Acts xvii. 28, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

6. (SUCH) KNOWLEDGE. See a similar strain of acknowledgement at the close of the third strophe, ver. 17, 18, and compare Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out !"

THY SPIRIT. "The word *Spirit*," says Calvin, "is not put here simply for the power of God, as commonly in the Scriptures, but for His mind and understanding. For inasmuch as the spirit in man is the seat of understanding, the Psalmist transfers the same to God ; which is clearer from the second member, where the word *face* (*presence*) is put for knowledge or sight."

8. MY BED IN HELL, lit. "Should I make the unseen world (*Sheol*) my bed." Comp. Is. lvii. 9.

9. If I could fly with the same swiftness from east to west as the first rays of the morning shoot from one end of heaven to the other.

WINGS OF THE MORNING. So the sun is said to have wings, Mal. iv. 2.

UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE SEA, *i.e.* the furthest west.

11. AND THE LIGHT ABOUT ME.

- 12 Even darkness cannot be too dark for Thee,  
 But the night is light as the day ;  
 The darkness and light (to Thee) are both alike.
- 13 For THOU hast formed my reins,  
 Thou didst weave me together in my mother's womb.
- 14 I will give Thee thanks for that I am fearfully and  
 wonderfully made ;  
 Wonderful are Thy works,  
 And my soul knoweth (it) right well.
- 15 My bones were not hid from Thee,  
 When I was made in secret,  
 (When) I was curiously wrought (as) in the lower  
 parts of the earth.
- 16 Thine eyes did see my substance yet being imperfect,  
 And in Thy book were they all of them written,—  
 The days which were ordered, when as yet there  
 was none of them.
- 17 And how precious unto me are Thy thoughts, O God,

The rendering of the E. V., "even the night shall be light about me," is defensible, and has the advantage of adhering to the order of the words in the Hebrew.

12. CANNOT BE TOO DARK FOR THEE, lit. "cannot be dark (so as to hide) from Thee."

13. "Who can have a truer and deeper knowledge of man than He who made him?"

MY REINS. See on xvi. 7. It seems to denote the sensational and emotional part of the human being, as afterwards "the bones" denote the framework of the body.

WEAVE ME TOGETHER, as in Job x. 11, "Thou hast woven me together (E. V. fenced me) with bones and sinews."

15. MY BONES, lit. "my strength," but here evidently meaning the bony framework of the body.

CURIOSLY WROUGHT. The verb is used of some kind of parti-coloured work, but whether woven or embroidered is doubtful.

IN SECRET. Comp. *Æsch. Eumen.* 665, ἐν σκοτοῖσι νηδὺς τετραμμένη.

IN THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH. Elsewhere the phrase denotes "the unseen world," comp. lxi. 9, lxxvi.

13. Here, as the parallelism shows, it is used in a figurative sense to describe a region of darkness and mystery.

16. MY SUBSTANCE YET BEING IMPERFECT. One word in the original, which means strictly anything *rolled together* as a ball, and hence is generally supposed to mean here the fetus or embryo.

ALL OF THEM, *i.e.* the days mentioned in the next verse.

17. He breaks off in wonder and admiration and holy thankfulness, as

How great is the sum of them !

18 If I would tell them, they are more in number than the sand :

When I awake, I am still with Thee.

19 Oh that thou wouldst slay the wicked, O God ;

Depart from me, ye bloodthirsty men ;

20 Who rebel against Thee with (their) wicked devices,  
(Who) lift up themselves against Thee in vain.

21 Should I not hate them which hate Thee, O Jehovah,  
And should I not be grieved with them that rise up  
against Thee ?

before in ver. 14 ; these expressions of personal feeling lending not only much beauty and force, but also much reality, to the contemplation of God's attributes. Comp. xxxvi. 7, xcii. 5 ; Rom. xi. 33.

HOW PRECIOUS, or perhaps (in accordance with the root-meaning of the word) "how hard to understand" (lit. "how heavy, or weighty"), in which case it would correspond with the ἀνεξεπείνητα of Rom. xi. 33.

18. MORE IN NUMBER. Comp. xl. 5.

WHEN I AWAKE, lit. "I have waked," *i.e.* as often as he awakes from sleep, he finds that he is again in the presence of God, again occupied with thoughts of God, again meditating afresh with new wonder and admiration on His wisdom and goodness.

19. How strangely abrupt is the turning aside from one of the sublimest contemplations to be found anywhere in the Bible, to express a hope that righteous vengeance will overtake the wicked. Such a passage is startling, — startling partly because the spirit of the New Testament is so different ; partly too, no doubt, because "our modern civilization has been so schooled in amenities" that we hardly know what

is meant by a righteous indignation. It is well, however, to notice the fact, for this is just one of those passages which help us to understand the education of the world. Just because it startles us is it so instructive. The 63rd Psalm presents us, as we have seen, with a similar contrast. There, however, the feeling expressed is of a more directly personal kind. David is encompassed and hard pressed by enemies who are threatening his life. He has been driven from his throne by rebels, and the deep sense of wrong makes him burst forth in the strain of indignation and of anticipated victory, "They that seek my life to destroy it shall be cast into the pit," &c. Here, apparently, the prayer for the overthrow of the wicked does not arise from a sense of wrong and personal danger, but from the intense hatred of wickedness as wickedness, from the deep conviction that, if hateful to a true-hearted man, it must be still more intensely hateful to Him who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins. The soul, in the immediate presence of God, places itself on the side of God, against all that is opposed to Him. Still, the prayer, "Oh that Thou wouldst slay the wicked," can never be a Christian prayer.

- 22 With perfect hatred do I hate them ;  
     I count them mine enemies.  
 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart :  
     Try me, and know my thoughts :  
 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me,  
     And lead me in the way everlasting.

23. SEARCH ME. "That man must have a rare confidence," says Calvin, "who offers himself so boldly to the scrutiny of God's righteous judgement." And then he remarks that such a prayer is no evidence of self-ignorance or a presumptuous spirit, but of integrity of heart and the absence of all hypocrisy. It is connected with what precedes in this way: that, having declared his utter separation from, and aversion to, the wicked, he prays that this may be no mere outward separation; he remembers that,

even whilst he seems most opposed to the wicked, the All-seeing Eye may discern in him some way of evil and sorrow; that only as God holds his hand, and leads him, can he walk in the way of life.

24. WICKED WAY, or rather "way of pain," *i.e.* leading to pain, such pain and smart being the consequences of sin, as in *Is. xiv. 3.*

WAY EVERLASTING, *i.e.* the one true abiding way, which leads to the true and everlasting God.

## PSALM CXL.

THIS Psalm is a prayer for protection against enemies who were both violent and crafty and unscrupulous in the use of their tongues. The general strain of the Psalm is like that of many which occur in the earlier Books, and like them it is ascribed to David. In tone and language it resembles Psalms lviii. and lxiv., but we have no means of testing the accuracy of the Inscription. The chief peculiarity of the Psalm is, that it has several words which occur nowhere else. The impression left upon the mind in reading them, I think, is that they are cast in David's vein and in imitation of his manner rather than written by David himself; but it would be absurd to

dogmatize in a matter where we are really left with nothing to guide us, unless we are disposed to accept the tradition from which the title has sprung.

The strophical division of the Psalm is, on the whole, regular. There are four strophes, consisting each of three verses, except that the third, instead of consisting of three verses of two members, consists of two verses of three members, so that the length of each strophe is in fact the same. There is also a concluding strophe of two verses. The close of the first three strophes is marked by the *Selah*.

[FOR THE PRECENTOR. A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 DELIVER me, O Jehovah, from the wicked man,  
From the violent man preserve me.
- 2 Who have imagined evil things in (their) hearts ;  
All the day they stir up wars.
- 3 They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent,  
Adder's poison is under their lips. [*Selah*.]
- 4 Keep me, O Jehovah, from the hands of the wicked,  
From the violent man preserve me,  
Who have purposed to thrust aside my steps.
- 5 The proud have hidden a snare for me, and cords,  
They have spread a net by the side of the road,  
They have set gins for me. [*Selah*.]
- 6 I said to Jehovah, THOU art my God,  
Give ear, O Jehovah, to the voice of my supplications.

1. WICKED MAN, or "wicked men" . . . "violent men" (the sing. being used collectively for the plur.), which is more in accordance with the plural in the next verse.

THE VIOLENT MAN, lit. "man of violences."

3. SHARPEN THEIR TONGUES. Comp. lii. 2. And for the next clause, lviii. 4, x. 7.

4. The opening of the second strophe is a repetition with slight variation of the opening of the first.



- 7 O Jehovah Lord, Thou strength of my salvation,  
 Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.
- 8 Grant not, O Jehovah, the desires of the wicked,  
 Further not his wicked device, that they be not  
 lifted up. [Selah.].
- 9 [When they lift up] the head that compass me about,  
 Let the mischief of their own lips cover them.
- 10 Let hot burning coals fall upon them,  
 Let them be cast into the fire,  
 Into floods of waters that they rise not again.
- 11 An evil speaker shall not be established in the earth,  
 The violent man—evil shall hunt him to overthrow  
 (him).
- 12 I know that Jehovah will maintain the cause of the  
 afflicted,  
 The right of the poor.
- 13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Thy Name ;  
 The upright shall dwell in Thy presence.

7. COVERED MY HEAD, *i.e.* as with a helmet. Comp. lx. 7.

BATTLE, lit. "armour," as in 1 Kings x. 25 ; 2 Kings x. 2 ; Ezek. xxxix. 9, 10.

10. LET THEM BE CAST, lit. "let one cast them," or perhaps Jehovah may be the subject of the verb, "May He cast them."

11. AN EVIL SPEAKER, lit. "a man of tongue ;" not, however, used here in the sense of "a talkative man ;" as the similar phrase, "a man of lips" (E. V. "a man full of talk"), in Job xi. 2, but with the further notion of *evil* speaking, as in ver. 3.

13. DWELL IN THY PRESENCE. See xi. 7, xvi. 11.

## PSALM CXLI.

THIS Psalm presents some peculiar difficulties of interpretation which are due to the extreme abruptness with which in verses 5—7 the thoughts follow one another, and the extreme obscurity which hangs over the allusions.

It has been usual to accept the Inscription which assigns the Psalm to David, and to refer it to the time of his persecution by Saul. Ver. 5 has generally been supposed to allude to David's generous conduct in sparing the life of his foe when he was in his power (see 1 Sam. xxiv., and comp. the note on ver. 6 of this Psalm), but it is quite impossible on this supposition to give any plausible interpretation to ver. 7.

Delitzsch, with more probability, refers the Psalm to the time of Absalom's rebellion. He sees an allusion to David's distance from the sanctuary and the worship of the sanctuary in ver. 2, and he explains ver. 6 of the punishment which shall overtake the rebel leaders, and the return of the people to their allegiance.

[A PSALM OF DAVID.]

1 O JEHOVAH, I have called upon Thee, haste Thee unto me ;

Give ear to my voice when I call upon Thee.

2 Let my prayer be set forth (as) incense before Thee,  
The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice

3 Set a watch, O Jehovah, before my mouth,  
Keep the door of my lips.

2. LIFTING UP OF MY HANDS, *i.e.* evidently, as the parallelism requires, in prayer ; comp. xxviii. 2.

EVENING SACRIFICE. The sacrifice here meant is strictly the offering consisting of fine flour with oil and frankincense, or of unleavened cakes mingled with oil, which was burnt upon the altar (Heb. *minchah*, E.V. "meat-offering") : see Lev. ii. 1—11. This, however, like the "incense," was only added to the burnt-offering, the lamb which was offered every morning and evening (Ex. xxix. 38—42 ; Numb. xxviii. 3—8). It would seem, therefore, that these two, "the incense" and "the offering of fine flour," &c., stand for the morning and evening sacrifices ; and the sense is, "Let my daily prayer be acceptable

to Thee as are the daily sacrifices of Thine own appointment." (The *minchah* is used 1 Kings xviii. 29, 36, of the whole evening sacrifice, and of the morning sacrifice 2 Kings iii. 20.) The incense may be mentioned because, as ascending in a fragrant cloud, it was symbolical of prayer (Rev. v. 8, viii. 3, 4) ; and the same would hold also of the "meat-offering," of which it is said that the priest was to burn a part as "a memorial," "a *sweet savour* unto Jehovah" (Lev. ii. 9).

3. SET A WATCH. Comp. xxxiv. 13, xxxix. 1, Prov. xiii. 3, xxi. 23. The prayer is apparently directed against the temptation to indulge in rash and foolish words, such as wicked men would indulge in (see next verse).

- 4 Incline not my heart to any evil thing,  
 To busy itself in wicked doings with men that work  
 iniquity;  
 And let me not eat of their dainties.
- 5 Let a righteous man smite me, it shall be a kindness;  
 And let him reprove me, it shall be as oil upon my  
 head,  
 Let not my head refuse (it):  
 For yet is my prayer against their wickednesses.
- 6 (When) their judges have been hurled down the sides  
 of the rock,

Others suppose that he prays to be kept from the temptation to break out into bitter words against his persecutors (as against Saul, if the Psalm be David's); or into murmurs and complaints against God.

4. INCLINE NOT. See note on cxix. 36.

DAINTIES. It is unnecessary to explain this of things sacrificed to idols, as if the Psalmist were surrounded by heathen: comp. xvi. 4. The temptation is rather to an easy, luxurious, sensual life, as in lxxiii.

5. According to the rendering I have preferred of this verse, the sense will be: "I will gladly welcome even the reproofs of the good (comp. Prov. xxvii. 6; Eccl. vii. 5), and I will avail myself of prayer as the best defence against the wickedness of my persecutors." It is possible, however, that the last clause may refer not to his enemies, but to the righteous, in which case it must be rendered, "For still my prayer shall be offered *in their misfortunes*."

In ver. 4 he had prayed that he might not be led astray by the evil he saw around him, nor allured by the blandishments and luxurious prosperity of the wicked. Now he says,

on the contrary, "let me ever be ready to welcome even reproof from the righteous," which, however harsh, is salutary. The wounds of a friend are faithful, and better than the kisses of an enemy.

6. This verse, difficult in itself, is still more difficult because it has no very obvious connection either with what precedes or with what follows. The allusions are so obscure that it is impossible to do more than guess at the meaning.

THEIR JUDGES must be in a general sense the "rulers" or "princes" of "the wicked;" for the pronoun must refer to them. The verse apparently describes a punishment which has been or will be inflicted upon them (see for this mode of punishment 2 Chron. xxv. 12; Luke iv. 29). The verb HURLED DOWN is the same which is used, 2 Kings ix. 33, of the throwing down of Jezebel from the window.

THE SIDES OF THE ROCK, lit. "along," or "by the sides (Heb. *hands*) of the rock or precipice." Comp. cxl. 5, "by *the side* of the path;" Jud. xi. 26, "by the sides (E.V. *coasts*, Heb. *hands*) of Arnon." Others, "into the hands (*i.e.* the power) of the rock," with the same

- Then they shall hear my words that they are sweet.  
 7 As when one furroweth the earth (with the plough),  
     Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of the  
     grave.  
 8 For unto Thee, O Jehovah, Lord, are mine eyes,  
     In Thee have I found refuge ; O pour not out my soul.  
 9 Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me,  
     From the gins of the workers of iniquity.  
 10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,  
     Whilst that I escape.

notion of punishment, but rather as in cxxxvii. 9, being hurled against the rock.

THEY SHALL HEAR, *i.e.* of course not the "judges," but either *their* followers who have been led astray by their pernicious influence, or perhaps, more generally, *men* shall hear. If the Psalm is to be referred to Absalom's rebellion, or any similar occasion, the sense will be, "When the leaders in the insurrection meet with the fate they deserve, then the subjects of the king will return to their allegiance." And the expression, "they shall hear my words that they are sweet," would be a thoroughly Oriental mode of describing the satisfaction with which they would welcome the gracious amnesty pronounced by their offended sovereign.

Others, who suppose that the Psalm alludes to David's magnanimity in sparing Saul when he was in his power (1 Sam. xxiv.), explain : "When their leaders (meaning Saul) were let go (suffered to escape) along the sides of the rock, they heard my words that they were sweet,"—recognised, that is, my forbearance and generosity in sparing my enemy, instead of taking his life.

7. AS WHEN ONE FURROWETH, &c., lit. "as one who furroweth and cleaveth in the earth." The allusion

is as obscure as in the previous verses, and the point of the comparison is differently explained. The bones scattered are compared either (1) to the clods broken by the ploughshare, or (2) to the seeds scattered in the earth turned up by the plough.

AT THE MOUTH, or perhaps "*for* the mouth," *i.e.* so as to be swallowed up by it.

GRAVE. Sheol, the abode of the dead, though here perhaps nothing more than the grave may be meant. The verse thus describes a complete and disastrous overthrow, and apparently of the whole nation ; for now we have the pronoun of the first person, "*our* bones."

8. FOR. The conjunction does not refer to what immediately precedes, but either to what is said in ver. 4, 5, or perhaps rather to the whole of the former part of the Psalm, so far as it consists of petition : "Listen to my prayer,—keep me from temptation,—*for* unto Thee are mine eyes."

POUR NOT OUT MY SOUL, *i.e.* give not my life up to destruction.

9. FROM THE SNARE, lit. "from the hands of the snare."

10. INTO THEIR OWN NETS. The pronoun is singular, used distributively,—"*Each* one of them into his own net." For the sentiment comp. vii. 15.

PSALM CXLII.

THIS is the last of the eight Psalms which, according to their Inscriptions, are to be referred to David's persecution by Saul. Like the 57th Psalm, it is supposed to describe his thoughts and feelings when he was "in the cave," though whether in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii. 1) or in that of Engedi (1 Sam. xxiv. 3) is not clear. (See Introduction to Psalm lvii.) The general strain of the Psalm is that of the earlier Books. It expresses in language like that of David the cleaving of the heart to God, the deep sense of loneliness, the cry for deliverance, the confidence that that deliverance will call forth the sympathy and the joy of many others. But whether it is written only in imitation of David's manner, or whether it is a genuine work of David's extracted perhaps from some history, and added, at a time subsequent to the Exile, to the present collection, it is impossible now to determine.

[A MASCHIL\* OF DAVID WHEN HE WAS IN THE CAVE. A PRAYER.]

- 1 WITH my voice to Jehovah will I cry,  
With my voice to Jehovah will I make my supplication.
- 2 I will pour out before Him my complaint ;  
My trouble before Him will I make known.
- 3 When my spirit is overwhelmed within me,  
THOU knowest my path ;  
In the way wherein I walk  
Have they hidden a snare for me.
- 4 Look on the right hand and see,

3. WHEN MY SPIRIT. The first member of this verse is perhaps to be connected with the preceding verse, precisely as the same words are found connected in the title of Ps. cii.

IS OVERWHELMED, lit. "darkens itself."

WITHIN ME, lit. "upon me."

4. ON THE RIGHT HAND, as the direction in which he would naturally

\* See Int., p. 6.

There is none that will know me ;  
 Refuge hath failed me ;  
 There is none that seeketh after my soul.

- 5 I have cried unto Thee, O Jehovah,  
 I have said, THOU art my refuge,  
 My portion in the land of the living.  
 6 Attend unto my cry,  
 For I am brought very low :  
 Deliver me from my persecutors,  
 For they are too strong for me.  
 7 Bring forth my soul out of prison,  
 That I may give thanks to Thy Name :  
 The righteous shall come about me,  
 Because Thou dealest bountifully with me.

look for succour (a παρασάτης). See xvi. 8, cix. 6, 31, cx. 5, cxxi. 5.

THAT WILL KNOW, lit. "that recognises me." Comp. Ruth ii. 10, 19.

SEEKETH AFTER, *i.e.* "troubleth himself concerning," as in 2 Sam. xi. 3 ; Job x. 6.

5. MY PORTION. Comp. xvi. 5, lxxiii. 26.

7. OUT OF PRISON. This is clearly to be understood figuratively. Comp. the parallel passage, cxliii. 11.

COME ABOUT ME, *i.e.* sympathising in my joy, though elsewhere the word is used in a hostile sense.\*

## PSALM CXLIII.

THIS is the last of the seven Penitential Psalms, as they are called. In the Hebrew it is styled a Psalm of David ; in some copies of the LXX. it is further said to have been written when he had to flee from his son Absalom. It is probable that the deep tone of sorrow and anguish which pervades the Psalm, and the deep sense of sin, led to the belief that it must be referred to that occasion. The spirit and

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\* The last passages of Scripture quoted by St. Francis d'Assisi were St. John xiii. and this verse, "The righteous shall compass me about, for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me." "Me expectant justit, donec retribuas me." The righteous wait expectant till I receive my recompense. A.D. 1226. "Life of St. Francis," by Mrs. Oliphant: *Sunday Library*.

the language, it is true, are not unworthy of David ; yet the many passages borrowed from earlier Psalms make it more probable that this Psalm is the work of some later Poet. Delitzsch says very truly, that if David himself did not write it—and he admits that the many expressions derived from other sources are against such a supposition—still the Psalm is “an extract of the most precious balsam from the old Davidic songs.” Like other post-Exile Psalms (such, for instance, as the 116th and 119th), it is a witness to us of the depth and reality of the religious life in the later history of the nation, and an evidence also of the way in which that life was upheld and cherished by the inspired words of David and other Psalmists and Prophets of old.

The Psalm consists of two parts, each of which is of six verses, the conclusion of the first being marked by the *Selah*. The first portion contains the complaint (ver. 1—6) ; the second, the prayer founded on that complaint (ver. 7—12).

## [A PSALM OF DAVID.]

- 1 O JEHOVAH, hear my prayer,  
Give ear to my supplications.  
In Thy faithfulness answer me, (and) in Thy  
righteousness.
- 2 And enter not into judgement with Thy servant ;  
For before Thee no man living is righteous.
- 3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul,

1. IN THY FAITHFULNESS. . . IN THY RIGHTEOUSNESS. It is to God's own character that the appeal is made. It is there first, and not in his own misery, that the sinner finds the great argument why his prayer should be answered. It is precisely the same ground which St. John takes : “If we confess our sins, He is *faithful* and *righteous* (true to His promise and true to His revealed character) to forgive us our sins.”

2. ENTER NOT INTO JUDGEMENT, as in Job ix. 32, xxii. 4. He traces his suffering to his sin : the malice of his enemies is the rod of God's

chastisement, calling him to repentance.

See in many of the passages referred to in Job the same deep sense of man's unrighteousness before a righteous God which the Psalmist here expresses. Yet it is that very righteousness before which he trembles, to which he appeals, which he needs, in which alone he can stand before his Judge. The passage clearly shows, says Calvin, that he is justified who is considered and accounted just before God, or whom the heavenly Judge Himself acquits as innocent.

3. FOR THE ENEMY. This is the

He hath smitten my life down to the earth,  
 He hath made me dwell in darkness as those that  
 are for ever dead.

4 And my spirit is overwhelmed in me,  
 My heart within me is desolate.

5 I have remembered the days of old,  
 I have meditated on all Thou hast done,  
 On the work of Thy hands do I muse.

6 I have stretched forth my hands unto Thee,  
 My soul (thirsteth) after Thee as a thirsty land.

[Selah.]

7 Make haste (to) answer me, O Jehovah,  
 My spirit faileth :

reason why he turns to God so earnestly. The outward suffering, the persecution, the chastisement laid upon him—it may have been through some guilt of his own—had purged the spiritual eye, had made him look within, had shown him his own heart, its sinfulness and its misery, as he had never seen it before; and this deep sense of sin and misery had led to the prayer in ver. 2. Hence his deliverance from his enemy and the forgiveness of his sin are naturally connected in his mind.

IN DARKNESS, lit. "in darknesses." as in lxxxviii. 6, where it is used of the abode of the dead.

Comp. with this verse vii. 5; Lam. iii. 6; Ps. lxxxviii. 3—6.

FOR EVER DEAD. The dead are so called as "fixed in an eternal state," as those who can never return again to this world.

4. IS OVERWHELMED. The same word as in lxxvii. 3, cvii. 5, cxlii. 3. "Having spoken of his outward troubles," says Calvin, "he now confesses the weakness of his spirit, whence we gather that his was no

stony fortitude, but that, whilst overwhelmed with sorrow so far as his natural feelings were concerned, he stood and was supported only by faith and the grace of the Spirit."

IS DESOLATE, or rather "is full of amazement," lit. "astories itself;" seeks to comprehend the mystery of its sufferings, and is ever beaten back upon itself in its perplexity. Comp. lxxvii. 3—6, 11—12.

6. I HAVE STRETCHED FORTH MY HANDS, as the weary child stretches forth its hands to its mother, that on her bosom it may be hushed to rest.

AFTER THEE. "Observe how he binds himself to God alone, cuts off every other hope from his soul, and, in short, makes his very need a chariot wherewith to mount up to God."

THIRSTY, lit. "weary," "languishing." "In great heat we see the earth cracking and gaping, as though with open mouth she asked for the rain from heaven."—*Calvin*.

7. In the second half of the Psalm many of the expressions are borrowed from earlier Psalms. With the prayer



- Hide not Thy face from me,  
 That so I become like unto them that go down into  
 the pit.
- 8 Cause me to hear Thy loving-kindness in the morning,  
 For in Thee have I trusted ;  
 Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,  
 For unto Thee have I lifted up my soul.
- 9 Deliver me from mine enemies, O Jehovah,  
 Unto Thee have I fled to hide me.
- 10 Teach me to do Thy will,  
 For Thou art my God ;  
 Let Thy good Spirit lead me in a straight path.
- 11 For Thy Name's sake, O Jehovah, quicken me,  
 In Thy righteousness bring my soul out of distress.

in this verse comp. xxvii. 9, lxix. 17, cii. 2 ; with the second clause comp. lxxxiv. 2, where the ardent longing for God is expressed in the same way.

THAT SO I BECOME, &c., is word for word as in xxviii. 1 ; comp. lxxxviii. 4.

8. IN THE MORNING, *i.e.* early, soon. Comp. Moses' prayer, xc. 14.

Various interpretations have been given, which are thus summed up by Calvin :—"Adverbium *mane* frigide quidam restringunt ad sacrificia. Scimus enim quotidie his sacrificia offerre solitos, matutinum et vespertinum. Alii subtilius accipiunt, quod Deus mitius agens cum suis servis dicatur formare novum diem. Alii metaphoram esse volunt et notari prosperum letumque statum : sicut triste et calamitosum tempus sæpe notatur per tenebras. Sed miror in hac voce quæri extraneos sensus, qua simpliciter repetit quod prius dixerat *festina*. Mane ergo tantundem valet ac tempestive vel celeriter."

THE WAY IN WHICH I SHOULD WALK. Comp. xxv. 4, cxlii. 3, with Exod. xxxiii. 13.

LIFTED UP MY SOUL, as in xxv. 1, lxxxvi. 4.

9. FLED TO HIDE ME, lit. "unto Thee have I hidden (myself)." But the phrase is very peculiar and its meaning doubtful.

10. TO DO THY WILL, not merely to *know* it ; hence the need of the Holy Spirit's aid, His quickening, guiding, strengthening, as well as His enlightening influence.

THY GOOD SPIRIT, as in Neh. ix. 20 ; comp. Ps. li. 11.

IN A STRAIGHT PATH, lit. "in a level land," or "on level ground," where there is no fear of stumbling and falling. Comp. Is. xvi. 7, "The path of the righteous is level. Thou makest level (even as if adjusted in the balance) the road of the righteous."

Comp. with this verse generally xxvii. 11, xxxi. 3, xl. 8, cxlii. 20.

11. OUT OF DISTRESS. Comp. cxlii. 7.

The series of petitions in ver. 8-12 may be thus grouped :—

(1) Prayer for God's mercy or loving-kindness, as that on which all

12 And of Thy loving-kindness cut off mine enemies,  
And destroy all the adversaries of my soul;  
For I am Thy servant.

hangs, and then for guidance (ver. 8).

(2) For deliverance from enemies, and then still more fully for a knowledge of God's will, and the gifts of His Spirit, that He may obey that will (ver. 9, 10).

(3) For a new life, and deliverance from suffering, and now not only for deliverance from his enemies, but for their destruction (ver. 11, 12).

Hence the second petition in (1) answers to the second petition in (2); the first in (2) to the second in (3).

Further, in ver. 8—10, the ground of the petition in each case is the personal relation of the Psalmist to God: "In Thee have I trusted," "Unto Thee have I lifted up my soul," "Unto Thee have I fled," "Thou art my God;" and so also at the close of ver. 12, "I am Thy Servant." On the other hand, in ver. 11, and the first member of ver. 12, the appeal is to God and His attributes, "For Thy Name's sake," "in Thy righteousness," "of Thy loving-kindness."

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## PSALM CXLIV.

THIS is a singularly composite Psalm. The earlier portion of it, to the end of ver. 11, consists almost entirely of a cento of quotations, strung together from earlier Psalms; and it is not always easy to trace a real connection between them. The latter portion of the Psalm, ver. 12—15, differs completely from the former. It bears the stamp of originality, and is entirely free from the quotations and allusions with which the preceding verses abound. It is hardly probable, however, that this concluding portion is the work of the Poet who compiled the rest of the Psalm: it is more probable that he has here transcribed a fragment of some ancient Poem, in which were portrayed the happiness and prosperity of the nation in its brightest days,—under David, it may have been, or at the beginning of the reign of Solomon.

His object seems to have been thus to revive the hopes of his nation, perhaps after the return from the Exile, by reminding them

how in their past history obedience to God had brought with it its full recompense.

The Psalmist recounts glorious victories in the past, complains that the nation is now beset by strange, *i.e.* barbarous, enemies, so false and treacherous that no covenant can be kept with them, prays for deliverance from them by an interposition great and glorious as had been vouchsafed of old, and anticipates the return of a golden age of peace and plenty.

[(A PSALM) OF DAVID.]

- 1 BLESSED be Jehovah my rock,  
Who traineth my hands for the war,  
My fingers for the battle.
- 2 My loving-kindness and my fortress,  
My high tower and my deliverer,  
My shield, and He in whom I find refuge,  
Who subdueth my people under me.
- 3 Jehovah, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge  
of him?

1. BLESSED, &c. "In the strength of this *Benedictus* it is said that Louis gained the victory over Alaric, King of the Goths."—*Delitzsch*.

The first two verses are taken from Ps. xviii. 2, 34, 46.

2. MY LOVING-KINDNESS. A singular expression for "God of my loving-kindness," lix. 10, 17; Jon. ii. 9. "Deum . . . bonitatem suam nominat, ab eo manare intelligens quicquid possidet bonorum."—*Calvin*.

MY DELIVERER, lit. "my deliverer for me," as the expression is found in the other version of Ps. xviii. in 2 Sam. xxii. 2. On the heaping together of epithets and titles of God, Calvin remarks that it is not superfluous, but designed to strengthen and confirm faith; for men's minds are

easily shaken, especially when some storm of trial beats upon them. Hence, if God should promise us His succour in one word, it would not be enough: in fact, in spite of all the props and aids He gives us, we constantly totter and are ready to fall, and such a forgetfulness of His loving-kindness steals upon us that we come near to losing heart altogether.

WHO SUBDUETH, as in xviii. 47, only there we have "peoples" instead of "my people," as here. The Psalmist is not triumphing in the exercise of despotic power, but gratefully acknowledges that the authority he wields comes only from God.

3. This and the next verse are again borrowed from other passages. The weakness of man seems here to be

- A son of man, that Thou makest account of him ?  
 4 (As for) man, he is like a breath,  
 His days are as a shadow that passeth.  
 5 Bow Thy heavens, O Jehovah, and come down,  
 Touch the mountains that they smoke.  
 6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them,  
 Send forth Thine arrows and destroy them.  
 7 Send forth Thine hand from above,  
 Rid me, and deliver me from great waters,  
 From the hand of strange persons,  
 8 Whose mouth hath spoken falsehood,  
 And whose right hand (is) a right hand of lies.
- 9 O God, a new song will I sing unto Thee,  
 Upon a ten-stringed lute will I play unto Thee.  
 10 Who giveth victory unto kings,  
 Who riddeth David His servant from the hurtful sword.  
 11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange persons,

urged as a reason why God should come to his succour against his enemies. Ver. 3 is a variation of viii. 4. Ver. 4 resembles xxxix. 5, 6 : compare cii. 11 ; Job viii. 9, xiv. 2.

5. Here begins the direct prayer for the overthrow of his enemies. The Psalmist longs for a Theophany, a coming of God to judgement, which he describes in language again borrowed from xviii. 9, 14—16.

TOUCH THE MOUNTAINS, as in civ. 32, with allusion perhaps to Exod. xix. 18, xx. 18.

6. CAST FORTH LIGHTNING, lit. "lighten lightning." The verb occurs nowhere else, and the verb translated "rid" in the next verse is found only here in this sense, so that even a writer who borrows so largely as this Psalmist has still his peculiarities.

7. STRANGE PERSONS, lit. "sons of the stranger," as in xviii. 44.

8. A RIGHT HAND OF LIES, de-

noting faithlessness to a solemn covenant, the right hand being lifted up in the taking of an oath.

9. The prayer for deliverance is followed by the promise of thankfulness for the aid vouchsafed. The "new song," however, is not given.

O GOD. The *Elohim* in this verse is the only one in the last two Books of the Psalter, except in Ps. cviii., which is a composite Psalm formed of two old Davidic Elohist Psalms, and therefore clearly a weak attempt to reproduce the old Davidic Elohist style."—*Delitzsch*.

A NEW SONG. Comp. xxxiii. 3, xl. 3, xcii. 3.

10. DAVID HIS SERVANT. Mentioned here apparently as an example of all kings and leaders, but with obvious reference to xviii. 50.

11. This verse is repeated as a refrain from ver. 7, 8.

Whose mouth hath spoken falsehood,  
And whose right hand is a right hand of lies.

- 12 We whose sons are as plants  
Grown up in their youth ;  
Our daughters as corner-pillars,  
Sculptured to grace a palace ;  
13 Our garners full,  
Affording all manner of stores ;  
Our sheep multiplying in thousands,  
In ten thousands in our pastures ;  
14 Our oxen laden (with the produce of our fields) ;  
No breach and no sallying forth (from our walls),  
And no cry (of battle) in our streets.

12. The passage which follows to the end, is, as has already been remarked, altogether unlike the rest of the Psalms.

AS PLANTS. In a striking sermon on this verse, the late Archdeacon Hare says of the figure here employed : "There is something so palpable and striking in this type, that, five-and-twenty years ago, in speaking of the gentlemanly character, I was led to say, 'If a gentleman is to grow up, he must grow like a tree : there must be nothing between him and heaven.'"

This figure marks the native strength and vigour and freedom of youth of the land, as the next does the polished gracefulness, the quiet beauty, of the maidens. They are like the exquisitely sculptured forms (the Caryatides) which adorned the corners of some magnificent hall or chamber of a palace.

CORNER-PILLARS, lit. "corners," Zech. ix. 15.

TO GRACE A PALACE, lit. "(after) the mode of structure of a palace."

13. PASTURES. This (and not "streets," E.V.) is the meaning of the word here, as in Job v. 10, Prov. viii. 26.

14. Every expression in this verse is of doubtful interpretation.

LADEN (WITH THE PRODUCE OF OUR FIELDS), or perhaps "great with young," i.e. "fruitful," which accords better with the preceding description of the sheep.

NO SALLYING FORTH, lit. "going out," which has been interpreted either of "going forth to war," or "going forth into captivity." This and the previous expression, taken together, most naturally denote a time of profound peace, when no enemy lies before the walls, when there is no need to fear the assault through the breach, no need to sally forth to attack the besiegers. Comp. Amos v. 3.

CRY (OF BATTLE). Such seems the

- 15 Happy is the people that is in such a case ;  
Happy is the people who hath Jehovah for its God.

probable meaning from the context ; or it may mean, generally, "cry of sorrow," as in Jer. xiv. 2.

STREETS, lit. broad open places, πλατεῖα.

The whole passage, 12—15, is a

picture of the most perfect, undisturbed peace and tranquillity.

15. HAPPY. The temporal blessing of prosperity, as a sign of God's favour, is natural enough under the Old Dispensation.

## PSALM CXLV.

THIS is the last of the Alphabetical Psalms, of which there are eight in all, if we reckon the 9th and 10th Psalms as forming one. Like four other of the Alphabetical Psalms, this bears the name of David, although there can in this case be no doubt that the Inscription is not to be trusted. As in several other instances, so here, the acrostic arrangement is not strictly observed. The letter *Nun* is omitted.

This is the only Psalm which is called a *Tehillah*, i.e. "Praise" or "Hymn," the plural of which word, *Tehillim*, is the general name for the whole Psalter. In the Talmud it is said : "Every one who repeats the *Tehillah* of David thrice a day may be sure that he is a child of the world to come. And why? Not merely because the Psalm is alphabetical (for that the 119th is, and in an eightfold degree), nor only because it celebrates God's care for all creatures (for that the Great Hallel does, cxxxvi. 25), but because it unites both these qualities in itself."

[A HYMN OF DAVID.]

- י Aleph I WILL exalt Thee, my God, O King,  
And I will bless Thy Name for ever and ever.

I. FOR EVER AND EVER. Not merely, as Calvin, *etiamsi plura secula*

*victurus est*: but the heart lifted up to God, and full of the thoughts of

- 2 Beth      Every day will I bless Thee,  
                 And I will praise Thy Name for ever and  
                 ever.
- 3 Gimel    Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised,  
                 And His greatness is unsearchable.
- 4 Daleth   One generation to another shall praise Thy  
                 works,  
                 And declare Thy mighty acts.
- 5 He        Of the glorious honour of Thy majesty,  
                 And of Thy wondrous works, will I meditate.
- 6 Vau       And (men) shall speak of the might of Thy  
                 terrible acts,  
                 And I will tell of Thy greatness.
- 7 Zain      They shall abundantly utter the memory of  
                 Thy great goodness,  
                 And sing aloud of Thy righteousness.
- 8 Cheth    Gracious and of tender compassion is Jehovah,  
                 Long-suffering and of great loving-kindness.
- 9 Teth      Jehovah is good unto all,  
                 And His tender compassions are over all  
                 His works.
- 10 Yod      All Thy works give thanks to Thee, O Jehovah,  
                 And Thy beloved bless Thee.
- 11 Caph     They talk of the glory of Thy kingdom,  
                 And speak of Thy might.
- 12 Lamed   To make known to the sons of men His mighty  
                 acts,  
                 And the glorious majesty of His kingdom.

God, can no more conceive that its praise should cease, than that God Himself should cease to be.

3. GREATLY TO BE PRAISED, or "greatly praised."

5. THY WONDROUS WORKS, lit. "the words of Thy wondrous works." Comp. lxvi. 3.

MEDITATE, or perhaps "rehearse," *i.e.* in poetry.

6. AND I WILL TELL, &c., lit. "and as for Thy greatnesses (or great acts), I will tell of every one of them."

7. ABUNDANTLY UTTER. So the verb is not inaptly paraphrased by our translators; lit. it is "pour forth," the same word as in xix. 2, lix. 7.

10. THY BELOVED. See on cxlix. 1.

- 13 Mem Thy kingdom is a kingdom for all ages,  
And Thy dominion for all generations.
- 14 Samech Jehovah upholdeth all them that fall,  
And raiseth up all those that be bowed down.
- 15 Ayin The eyes of all wait on Thee,  
And Thou givest them their food in its  
season ;
- 16 Pe Opening Thine hand,  
And satisfying the desire of every living  
thing.
- 17 Tsaddi Jehovah is righteous in all His ways,  
And loving in all His works.
- 18 Koph Jehovah is nigh to all them that call upon Him,  
To all who call upon Him in truth.
- 19 Resh He fulfilleth the desire of them that fear Him,  
And when He heareth their cry He helpeth  
them.
- 20 Shin Jehovah keepeth all them that love Him,  
But all the wicked will He destroy.
- 21 Tau Let my mouth speak the praise of Jehovah,  
And let all flesh bless His Holy Name for  
ever and ever.

14. The glory, the majesty, the eternity of God's kingdom, of which so much has been said—how are they manifested? Wherein is the conspicuous excellence of that kingdom seen? Not in the symbols of earthly pride and power, but in gracious condescension to the fallen and the crushed, in a gracious care which provides for the wants of every living

thing. (We have here a resumption and expansion of the thoughts in ver. 8, 9.)

ALL THEM THAT FALL. Others, "them that are ready to fall."

15. This verse, and the first clause of the next, are taken from civ. 27, 28.

16. SATISFYING THE DESIRE, lit. "satisfying every living thing with (the object of) its desire."

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## PSALM CXLVI.

WITH this Psalm begins another series of Hallelujah Psalms, with which the Book closes. Certain of the words and phrases seem to



connect it with the 145th; others are borrowed from the 104th and 118th. The LXX. ascribe it, as they do the 138th and the next two Psalms, to Haggai and Zechariah. It is by no means improbable that this Inscription represents an ancient tradition, for nothing would be more natural than that these Prophets should directly or indirectly have contributed to the liturgy of the Second Temple, to which these Psalms so evidently belong. Later they formed, together with Psalms cxlix. and cl., a portion of the daily morning prayer; they also had the name of "Hallel," though expressly distinguished from "the Hallel" which was to be sung at the Passover and the other Feasts.

The Psalm bears evident traces, both in style and language, and also in its allusions to other Psalms, of belonging to the post-Exile literature; and the words of verses 7—9 are certainly no inapt expression of the feelings which would naturally be called forth at a time immediately subsequent to the return from the Captivity.

It is an exhortation to trust not in man (ver. 3, 4), but in Jehovah alone (ver. 5),—an exhortation enforced by the exhibition of Jehovah's character and attributes as the one really worthy object of trust (ver. 6—9), and confirmed by the fact that His kingdom does not contain the seeds of weakness and dissolution, like all earthly kingdoms, but is eternal as He is eternal (ver. 10).

### HALLELUJAH!

1 PRAISE Jehovah, O my soul!

2 I will praise Jehovah while I live,

I will play (on the harp) unto my God while I have  
my being.

3 Trust not in princes,

(Nor) in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

4 His breath goeth forth; he turneth to his earth,

2. WHILE I HAVE MY BEING, lit. "while I yet (am)." Not in this song only will he utter His praise, but "his life shall be a thanksgiving unto the Power that made him."

3. TRUST NOT IN PRINCES. A warning which might be called forth by the circumstances of the nation

after their return from Babylon. See on cxviii. 8, 9.

NO HELP, or "no salvation." Comp. xxxiii. 16, lx. 11.

4. HIS BREATH. Comp. civ. 29. And, with his breath, HIS THOUGHTS or "purposes," however grand in conception, however masterly the

- In that very day his thoughts perish.
- 5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,  
Whose hope (rests) upon Jehovah his God,
- 6 Who made heaven and earth,  
The sea, and all that therein is ;  
Who keepeth truth for ever ;
- 7 (Who) executeth judgement for the oppressed,  
(Who) giveth bread to the hungry :  
Jehovah looseth the prisoners,
- 8 Jehovah openeth the eyes of the blind,  
Jehovah raiseth up them that are bowed down,  
Jehovah loveth the righteous ;
- 9 Jehovah keepeth the strangers,  
He setteth up the widow and the fatherless,  
But the way of the wicked He turneth aside.

execution, all come to an end. The science, the philosophy, the statesmanship of one age is exploded in the next. The men who are the masters of the world's intellect to-day are discredited to-morrow. In this age of restless and rapid change they may survive their own thoughts : their thoughts do not survive them.

6. WHO MADE (as in cxv. 15, cxxi. 2, cxxiv. 8, cxxxiv. 3, this designation of God being characteristic of the later Psalms). First, He is an *Almighty* God, as the Creator of the universe ; next, He is a *faithful* God ("who keepeth truth for ever") ; further, He is a *righteous* God (ver. 7), a *bountiful* God (*ib.*), a *gracious* God (ver. 7—9).

WHO KEEPETH. In the series of participles marking the several acts or attributes of God in this and the next two verses, this only has the article prefixed, perhaps because the Psalmist designed to give a certain prominence or emphasis to this attribute of God, that He is One "who keepeth truth for ever." It is, in fact,

the central thought of the Psalm. For on this ground beyond all others is God the object of trust. He is true, and His word is truth, and that word He keeps, not for a time, but for ever.

7—9. These verses portray God's character as a Ruler. It is such a God who is Zion's King, ver. 10. Such an One men may trust, for He is not like the princes of the earth, ver. 3.

7. LOOSETH THE PRISONERS. Comp. Is. lxi. 1.

8. OPENETH THE EYES, lit. "openeth the blind," i.e. maketh them to see. The expression may be used figuratively, as a remedy applied either to physical helplessness, as Deut. xxviii. 29, Is. xxix. 18, Job xii. 25 ; or to spiritual want of discernment as, Is. lix. 9, 10, xlii. 7, 18, xliii. 8. Here the context favours the former.

RAISETH UP. This word only occurs once besides, cxlv. 14.

9. THE STRANGERS . . . THE WIDOW . . . THE FATHERLESS, the three great examples of natural defencelessness.

HE TURNETH ASIDE. That which

IO Jehovah shall be king for ever,  
 Thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.  
 Hallelujah !

happens in the course of God's Providence, and as the inevitable result of His righteous laws, is usually ascribed

in Scripture to His immediate agency.  
 IO. SHALL BE KING. See Introduction to xcix.

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## PSALM CXLVII.

LIKE the last Psalm, and like those which follow it, this is evidently an anthem intended for the service of the Second Temple. It celebrates God's almighty and gracious rule over His people and over the world of nature, but mingles with this a special commemoration of His goodness in bringing back His people from their captivity and rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. In the allusions to these events in ver. 2, 3, and ver. 13, 14, we shall probably be justified in seeing the occasion of the Psalm. It may have been written for the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, which, as we learn from Nehem. xii. 27, was kept "with gladness, both with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps." It is indeed not improbable, as Hengstenberg suggests, that not this Psalm only, but the rest of the Psalms to the end of the Book, are all anthems originally composed for the same occasion. The wall had been built under circumstances of no ordinary difficulty and discouragement (Neh. ii. 17—iv. 23); its completion was celebrated with no common joy and thankfulness; "for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." See Neh. xii. 27—43.

The Psalm cannot be said to have any regular strophical arrangement, but the renewed exhortations to praise in ver. 7, 12, suggest a natural division of the Psalm. It is a *Trifolium* of praise.

## 1 HALLELUJAH!

For it is good to sing praises unto our God,

For it is sweet; comely is the hymn of praise.

## 2 Jehovah doth build up Jerusalem,

He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel;

## 3 Who healeth the broken in heart,

And bindeth up their wounds;

## 4 Who telleth the number of the stars,

(And) calleth them all (by their) names.

## 5 Great is our Lord, and of great power,

1. This verse might perhaps be better rendered with the change of a single consonant: "Praise ye Jah, for He is good: sing unto our God, for He is lovely; comely is the hymn of praise." Comp. cxxxv. 3, xxxiii. 1.

2. DOTH BUILD UP. With reference to the rebuilding of the walls after the Captivity, as in cxxii. 3.

OUTCASTS, lit. "those who are thrust out, driven away." It is the same word as in Is. xi. 12, lvi. 8.

3. BROKEN IN HEART. As in xxxiv. 18, Is. lxi. 1.

4. WHO TELLETH THE NUMBER, lit. "apportioneth a number to the stars." This is adduced as a proof of the omniscience and omnipotence of God, and hence as a ground of consolation to His people, however they may have been scattered, and however they may have been oppressed. Surely He must know, He must be able to succour, human woe, to whom it is an easy thing to count those stars which are beyond man's arithmetic (Gen. xv. 5).

The argument is precisely the same as in Is. xl. 26—29, "Lift up your eyes and see: Who hath created these things? It is He that bringeth out *their host by number, who calleth them*

*all (by) name. For abundance of power, and because He is mighty in strength, not one faileth. Why sayest Thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from Jehovah, and my cause is passed away from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard? An everlasting God is Jehovah, who created the ends of the earth. He fainteth not, neither is weary: there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth to the weary strength, and to them that have no power He increaseth might,"* &c. The passage in italics will show how evidently the words of the Prophet were in the mind of the Psalmist.

CALLETH THEM, &c., lit. "calleth names to all of them," an expression marking not only God's power in marshalling them all as a host (Is. xl. 26), but also the most intimate knowledge and the most watchful care, as that of a shepherd for his flock, John x. 3.

5. OF GREAT POWER, lit. "abounding in power," as in Is. xl. 26, "mighty in strength," though there perhaps the epithet applies to the stars, unless indeed we may take the use of the phrase here as deciding its application there.

- His understanding is infinite.  
 6 Jehovah setteth up the afflicted,  
     He casteth the wicked down to the ground.  
 7 Sing unto Jehovah with thanksgiving,  
     Play upon the harp unto our God ;  
 8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds,  
     Who prepareth rain for the earth,  
     Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains ;  
 9 (Who) giveth to the cattle their food,  
     (And) to the young ravens which cry.  
 10 Not in the strength of the horse doth He delight,  
     Not in the legs of a man doth He take pleasure ;  
 11 The pleasure of Jehovah is in them that fear Him,  
     In them that hope for His loving-kindness.  
 12 Laud Jehovah, O Jerusalem,  
     Praise thy God, O Zion ;  
 13 For He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates,  
     He hath blessed thy children in the midst of  
     thee ;

HIS UNDERSTANDING IS INFINITE, lit. "to (of) His understanding there is no number," whereas both in cxlv. 3 and Is. xl. 28 it is, "there is no searching." Comp. Rom. xi. 33, ἀνεξιχνίαστοι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ.

6. The same Lord who with infinite power and unsearchable wisdom rules the stars in their courses, rules also the world of man. The history of the world is a mirror both of His love and of His righteous anger. His rule and His order are a correction of man's anarchy and disorder.

7. A fresh burst of praise because of God's fatherly care, as shown in His provision for the wants of the cattle and the fowls of the air. And as He feeds the ravens (comp. Luke xii. 24), which have neither storehouse nor barn, but only cry to Him for their food (Job xxxviii. 41), so

amongst men (ver. 10) His delight is not in those who trust in their own strength and swiftness, but in those who look to *Him*, fear *Him*, put their trust in *His* goodness.

In ver. 8 the LXX. have added, from civ. 14, "and help for the service of men," whence it has found its way into our P.B.V. But here this addition is out of place, and disturbs the order of thought. It is not in ver. 10, 11, that *man* is introduced.

12. Again the Psalmist takes his hymn of praise, and now with a direct reference to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the bright prospect which seemed to dawn upon the nation after its restoration.

13. HATH STRENGTHENED THE BARS OF THY GATES. The expression might certainly denote negatively the security of the city, but as

- 14 Who maketh thy border peace,  
 (And satisfieth thee with the fat of wheat ;  
 15 Who sendeth forth His commandment upon earth :  
 His word runneth very swiftly ;  
 16 Who giveth snow like wool,  
 (And) scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes ;  
 17 (Who) casteth forth His ice like morsels :  
 Who can stand before His frost ?  
 18 He sendeth His word and melteth them,  
 He causeth His wind to blow, (and the) waters  
 flow.  
 19 He declareth His word unto Jacob,  
 His statutes and His judgements unto Israel.

the Psalm so evidently refers to the return from the Captivity and the rebuilding of Jerusalem (ver. 2), there can be little doubt that there is here a direct and literal reference to the setting up of the gates as described in Neh. vii. 1—4.

With the latter part of the verse comp. the promise in Is. lx. 17, 18, "I will also make thy officers peace . . . violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders, but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."

14. FAT OF WHEAT. See on lxxxi. 16.

15—18. This repeated reference to God's power as manifested in the world is certainly remarkable, and is characteristic of these later Psalms. It may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that never had so strong a conviction laid hold of the national heart, of the utter impotence of all the gods of the heathen, as after the return from the Exile ; never, therefore, so triumphant and living a sense of the dominion of Jehovah, not in Israel only, but throughout the universe.

15. HIS COMMANDMENT, or "*saying*," with reference perhaps to the creative fiat, "And God *said*:" comp. xxxiii. 9. God is said to "send" this as His messenger, as in cvii. 20.

16. SNOW LIKE WOOL, &c. The point of the comparison is probably merely in the general resemblance of the snow, frost, ice, to the different objects mentioned, not in "the ease with which God accomplishes the greatest things as man does the least, such as causing some locks of wool to fly, or scattering a few ashes." (Hengst.)

19. God's works in Nature are for all men : "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45) ; but there is a special privilege belonging to His chosen people. They, and they alone in the world, have received the lively oracles of His mouth. Comp. Rom. iii. 1, 2, "What advantage then hath the Jew? . . . Much every way : first, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

20 He hath not dealt so with any nation ;  
 And as for (His) judgements, they do not know them.  
 Hallelujah !

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## PSALM CXLVIII.

IN this splendid Anthem the Psalmist calls upon the whole creation, in its two great divisions (according to the Hebrew conception) of heaven and earth, to praise Jehovah. Things with and things without life, beings rational and irrational, are summoned to join the mighty chorus. The Psalm is an expression of the loftiest devotion, and embraces at the same time the most comprehensive view of the relation of the creature to the Creator. Whether it is exclusively the utterance of a heart filled to the full with the thought of the infinite majesty of God, or whether it is also an anticipation, a prophetic forecast, of the final glory of creation, when, at the manifestation of the sons of God, the creation itself also shall be redeemed from the bondage of corruption (Rom. viii. 18—23), and the homage of praise shall indeed be rendered by all things that are in heaven and earth and under the earth, is a question into which we need not enter. The former seems to my mind the more probable view.

Isaac Taylor says : “ It is but faintly and afar off that the ancient liturgies (except so far as they merely copied their originals) come up to the majesty and the wide compass of the Hebrew worship, such as it is indicated in the 148th Psalm. Neither Ambrose, nor Gregory, nor the Greeks, have reached or approached this level ; and in tempering the boldness of their originals by admixtures of what is more Christianlike and spiritual, the added elements sustain an injury which is not compensated by what they bring forward of a purer or less earthly kind : feeble, indeed, is the tone of these anthems of the ancient Church ; sophisticated or artificial in their style. Nor would it be possible,—it has never yet seemed so,—to Christianize the Hebrew anthems, retaining their power, their earth-

like richness, and their manifold splendours—which are the very splendours and the true riches and the grandeur of God's world—and withal attempered with expressions that touch to the quick the warmest human sympathies. And as the enhancement of all these there is the *nationality*, there is that fire which is sure to kindle fire in true human hearts—

‘He showeth His word unto Jacob,  
His statutes and His judgements unto Israel.  
He hath not dealt so with any nation ;  
As for His judgements, they have not known them.’

[From the close of the 147th Psalm].”—*Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry*, pp. 157, 158.

The earliest imitation of this Psalm is “The Song of the Three Children,” interpolated by the LXX. into the 3rd chapter of Daniel. The Hymn of Francis of Assisi, in which he calls upon the creatures to praise God, *propter honorabilem fratrem nostrum solem*, has also been compared with it, though there is really no comparison between the two. The same Francis, who thus calls the sun our “honourable brother,” could also address a cricket as his sister, “Canta, soror mea cicada, et Dominum creatorem tuum júbilo lauda.” But neither in this Psalm, nor elsewhere in Scripture, is this brotherly and sisterly relation of things inanimate and irrational to man recognised or implied.

The Psalm consists of two equal parts :

- I. The praise of God in heaven. Ver. 1—6.
- II. The praise of God on earth. Ver. 7—12.

# I HALLELUJAH !

O praise Jehovah from the heavens,  
Praise Him in the heights.

- 2 Praise ye Him, all His angels,  
Praise Him, all His hosts.

I. FROM THE HEAVENS. This first verse is not to be restricted merely to the angels. It is the prelude com-

prising all afterwards enumerated, angels, sun and moon, &c.

2. HIS HOSTS. Here, as is plain



- 3 Praise Him, sun and moon,  
     Praise Him, all ye stars of light.  
 4 Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens,  
     And ye waters, that be above the heavens.  
 5 Let them praise the Name of Jehovah,  
     For HE commanded, and they were created ;  
 6 And He made them to stand (fast) for ever and ever.  
     He hath given them a decree, and they transgress it  
     not.
- 7 O praise Jehovah from the earth,  
     Ye sea-monsters and all deeps ;  
 8 Fire and hail, snow and vapour,  
     Stormy wind fulfilling His word ;  
 9 Ye mountains, and all hills,  
     Fruit-trees, and all cedars ;  
 10 Beasts, and all cattle,  
     Creeping things, and winged fowl ;  
 11 Kings of the earth, and all peoples,

from the parallelism, "the angels," as also in 1 Kings xxii. 19, though elsewhere the expression is used of the *stars*, and some would so understand it here.

4. HEAVENS OF HEAVENS. A superlative, according to the common Hebrew idiom, denoting "the highest heavens;" comp. 2 Cor. xii. 2. Others take it as a poetical way of expressing the apparently boundless depth of the heavens.

WATERS . . . ABOVE THE HEAVENS, as in Gen. i. 7. This is usually explained of the clouds, though the form of expression cannot be said to favour such an explanation, nor yet the statement in Genesis, that the firmament or expanse was intended to separate the waters above from the waters below. Taken in their obvious meaning, the words must point to the existence of a vast heavenly sea or reservoir. However, it is quite out

of place, especially when dealing with language so evidently poetical as this, to raise any question as to its scientific accuracy.

6. AND THEY TRANSGRESS IT NOT, lit. "and none of them transgressed it;" for the verb is in the singular, and therefore distributive.

7. The second great division of created things,—that is, according to the Old Test. view, THE EARTH.

SEA-MONSTERS, mentioned first, as at the bottom of the scale in creation, as in Gen. i. 21.

8. FIRE, *i.e.* "lightning," as in xviii. 12, where it is in like manner joined with hail.

VAPOUR, or perhaps rather "smoke," answering to "fire" and "snow" to "hail."

STORMY WIND, as in cvii. 25.

11, 12. Man mentioned last, as the crown of all. The first step (see ver. 7) and the last are the same as in

- Princes, and all judges of the earth ;  
 12 Both young men, and maidens,  
 Old men, and children :  
 13 Let them praise the Name of Jehovah,  
 For His Name only is exalted,  
 His majesty above earth and heaven.  
 14 And He hath lifted up the horn of His people,  
 A praise to all His beloved,  
 (Even) to the children of Israel, a people near  
 unto Him.

Hallelujah !

Gen. i. In the intervening stages, with the usual poetic freedom, the order of Genesis is not adhered to.

13. LET THEM PRAISE, exactly as at the close of the first great division of the anthem, ver. 5 ; and in the same way as there, the reason for the exhortation follows in the next clause. But it is a different reason. It is no longer because He has given them a decree, bound them as passive unconscious creatures by a law which they cannot transgress. (It is the fearful mystery of the reasonable will that it can transgress the law.) It is because His Name is exalted, so that the eyes of men can see and the hearts and tongues of men confess it ; it is because He has graciously revealed Himself to, and mightily succoured, the people whom He loves, the nation

who are near to Him. If it be said, that what was designed to be a Universal Anthem is thus narrowed at its close, it must be remembered that, however largely the glory of God was written on the visible creation, it was only to the Jew that any direct revelation of His character had been made.

14. LIFTED UP THE HORN. The horn being the house of David.

A PRAISE. This may either be (1) in apposition with the whole previous sentence, viz. the lifting up of the horn is "a praise," a glory, to His beloved (comp. Is. lxi. 3, 11, lxii. 7) ; or (2) in apposition with the subject of the previous verb, God Himself is "a praise (*i.e.* object of praise) to," &c.

NEAR UNTO HIM, as a holy people, Deut. iv. 7. Comp. Lev. x. 3.

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## PSALM CXLIX.

THE feelings expressed in this Psalm are perfectly in accordance with the time and the circumstances to which we have already referred the whole of this closing group of Hallelujah Psalms, beginning

with the 146th. It breathes the spirit of intense joy and eager hope which must have been in the very nature of things characteristic of the period which succeeded the return from the Babylonish captivity. Men of strong faith and religious enthusiasm and fervent loyalty must have felt that in the very fact of the restoration of the people to their own land was to be seen so signal a proof of the Divine favour, that it could not but be regarded as a pledge of a glorious future yet in store for the nation. The burning sense of wrong, the purpose of a terrible revenge, which was the feeling uppermost when they had first escaped from their oppressors (as in Psalm cxxxvii.), was soon changed into the hope of a series of magnificent victories over all the nations of the world, and a setting up of a universal dominion. It is such a hope which is expressed here. The old days of the nation, and the old martial spirit, are revived. God is their King (ver. 2), and they are His soldiers, going forth to wage His battles, with His praises in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hands. A spirit which now seems sanguinary and revengeful had, it is not too much to say, its proper function under the Old Testament, and was not only natural but necessary, if that small nation was to maintain itself against the powerful tribes by which it was hemmed in on all sides. But it ought to require no proof that language like that of ver. 6—9 of this Psalm is no warrant for the exhibition of a similar spirit in the Christian Church.

“The dream that it was possible to use such a prayer as this, without a spiritual transubstantiation of the words, has made them the signal for some of the greatest crimes with which the Church has ever been stained. It was by means of this Psalm that Casper Sciopius in his ‘*Ciarion of the Sacred War*’ (*Classicum Belli Sacri*), a work written, it has been said, not with ink but with blood, roused and inflamed the Roman Catholic Princes to the Thirty Years’ War. It was by means of this Psalm that, in the Protestant community, Thomas Münzer fanned the flames of the War of the Peasants. We see from these and other instances that when in her interpretation of such a Psalm the Church forgets the words of the Apostle, ‘the weapons of our warfare are not carnal’ (2 Cor. x. 4), she falls back upon the ground of the Old Testament, beyond which she has long since advanced,—ground which even the Jews themselves do not venture to maintain, because they cannot altogether withdraw themselves from the influence of the light which has dawned in Christianity, and

which condemns the vindictive spirit. The Church of the Old Testament, which, as the people of Jehovah, was at the same time called to wage a holy war, had a right to express its hope of the universal conquest and dominion promised to it, in such terms as those of this Psalm; but, since Jerusalem and the seat of the Old Testament worship have perished, the national form of the Church has also for ever been broken in pieces. The Church of Christ is built up among and out of the nations; but neither is the Church a nation, nor will ever again one nation be the Church, *κατ' ἐξέχην*. Therefore the Christian must transpose the letter of this Psalm into the spirit of the New Testament."—*Delitzsch*.

# 1 HALLELUJAH!

O sing to Jehovah a new song,

His praise in the congregation of (His) beloved.

## 2 Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him,

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King;

## 3 Let them praise His Name in (the) dance,

With tabret and harp let them play unto Him;

## 4 For Jehovah hath pleasure in His people,

He beautifieth the afflicted with salvation,

## 5 Let (His) beloved exult with glory,

Let them sing aloud upon their beds;

1. A NEW SONG. As expressive of all the new hopes and joys of a new era, a new spring of the nation, a new youth of the Church bursting forth into a new life.

(HIS) BELOVED, or "them that love Him;" see on xvi. 10. A name repeated ver. 5 and 9, and therefore characteristic of the Psalm.

2. IN THEIR KING. God again is claimed emphatically as the King of the nation, when they had no longer a king sitting on David's throne. Such a King will not leave them under foreign rule: He will break the yoke of every oppressor from their neck.

4. HATH PLEASURE, as has been shown by their restoration to their own land. Comp. Is. liv. 7, 8.

BEAUTIFIETH. Comp., as having the same reference to the change in the condition of the nation, Is. lv. 5; lx. 7, 9, 13; lxi. 3.

5. WITH GLORY, or it might be rendered "because of (the) glory (put upon them)."

UPON THEIR BEDS. Even there, even when they have laid themselves down to rest, let them break forth into joyful songs at the thought of God's high favour shown to them, in the anticipation of the victories which

- 6 (With) the high (praises) of God in their mouth,  
 And a two-edged sword in their hand ;  
 7 To execute vengeance on the nations,  
 And punishments on the people ;  
 8 To bind their kings with chains,  
 And their nobles with iron fetters ;  
 9 To execute upon them (the) judgement written,  
 It is an honour for all His beloved.

Hallelujah!

they shall achieve. Comp. Hos. vii. 14.

6. A revival of the old military spirit of the nation, of which we have an instance Neh. iv. 17, "With the one hand they did their work, and with the other they held the sword." But a still better parallel is 2 Macc. xv. 27.

9. (THE) JUDGEMENT WRITTEN. This has been explained by some to have reference to the judgement written in the law, or such judgements as are threatened in the Old Test. ; or by others as the "judgement written," one in accordance with the Divine will as written in Scripture, as opposed to selfish aims and passions. But perhaps it is better to take it as de-

noting a judgement fixed, settled—as committed to writing, so as to denote its permanent, unalterable character—written thus by God Himself. As in Is. lxv. 6, God says, "Behold it is written before Me : I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom."

IT IS AN HONOUR. That is, the subjection of the world described in the previous verses. But perhaps it is better to take the pronoun as referring to God : "He is a glory to all," &c. : *i.e.* either (1) His glory and majesty are reflected in His people ; or (2) He is the author and fountain of their glory ; or (3) He is the glorious object of their praise.

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## PSALM CL.

THE great closing Hallelujah, or Doxology, of the Psalter, in which every kind of musical instrument is to bear its part as well as the voice of man, in which not one nation only, but "everything that hath breath," is invited to join. It is one of those Psalms which "declare

their own intention as anthems, adapted for that public worship which was the glory and delight of the Hebrew people; a worship carrying with it the soul of the multitude by its simple majesty and by the powers of music, brought in their utmost force to recommend the devotions of earth in the ears of heaven." "Take it," says Isaac Taylor, "as a sample of this class, and bring the spectacle and the sounds into one, for the imagination to rest in. It was evidently to subserve the purposes of *music* that these thirteen verses are put together: it was no doubt to give effect first to the human voice, and then to the alternations of instruments,—loud and tender and gay,—with the graceful movements of the dance, that the anthem was composed and its chorus brought out,

‘Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!  
Praise ye the Lord!’

And so did the congregated thousands take up their part with a shout, ‘even as the voice of many waters.’—*Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry*, pp. 156, 157.

# 1 HALLELUJAH!

O praise God in His sanctuary,  
Praise Him in the firmament of His might.

2 Praise Him for His mighty acts,  
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

3 Praise Him with the sound of the cornet,  
Praise Him with lute and harp.

4 Praise Him with tabret and dance,

1. IN HIS SANCTUARY. This may be either the earthly or the heavenly Temple. The character of the Psalm as a liturgical anthem would seem to show that the former is meant; the parallelism would favour the latter. See xi. 4, where there is the same ambiguity.

FIRMAMENT OF HIS MIGHT, *i.e.* the heaven in which His kingly power and majesty are displayed. Comp. lxxviii. 34.

3. CORNET, properly the curved instrument made of a ram's horn (see on lxxxi. 3), and distinct from the straight metal trumpet, though in the Talmud it is said that after the destruction of the Temple the distinction of names was no longer observed.

4. TABRET, or "tambourine." The Hebrew *tōph* is the same as the Arab. *dūff*; and the Spanish *adufe* is derived through the Moorish from the same root.

- Praise Him upon the strings and pipe.  
 5 Praise Him upon the clear cymbals,  
     Praise Him upon the loud cymbals.  
 6 Let everything that hath breath praise Jah!  
     HALLELUJAH!

STRINGS. This is probably the meaning, as in Syriac.

PIPE, properly "shepherd's flute," Gen. iv. 21; but not elsewhere mentioned as an instrument employed in sacred music.

5. CYMBALS. The Hebrew word is by its form intended to describe the *clanging* of these instruments. It occurs in sacred music, 2 Sam. vi. 5. The distinction between the two kinds

mentioned is, probably, that the first, as smaller, had a clear, high sound; the latter, as larger, a deep, loud sound. Others render "castanets."

6. LET EVERYTHING THAT HATH BREATH, and, above all, the voice of man, as opposed to the dead instruments mentioned before.

What more fitting close than this of the great "Book of Praises"?





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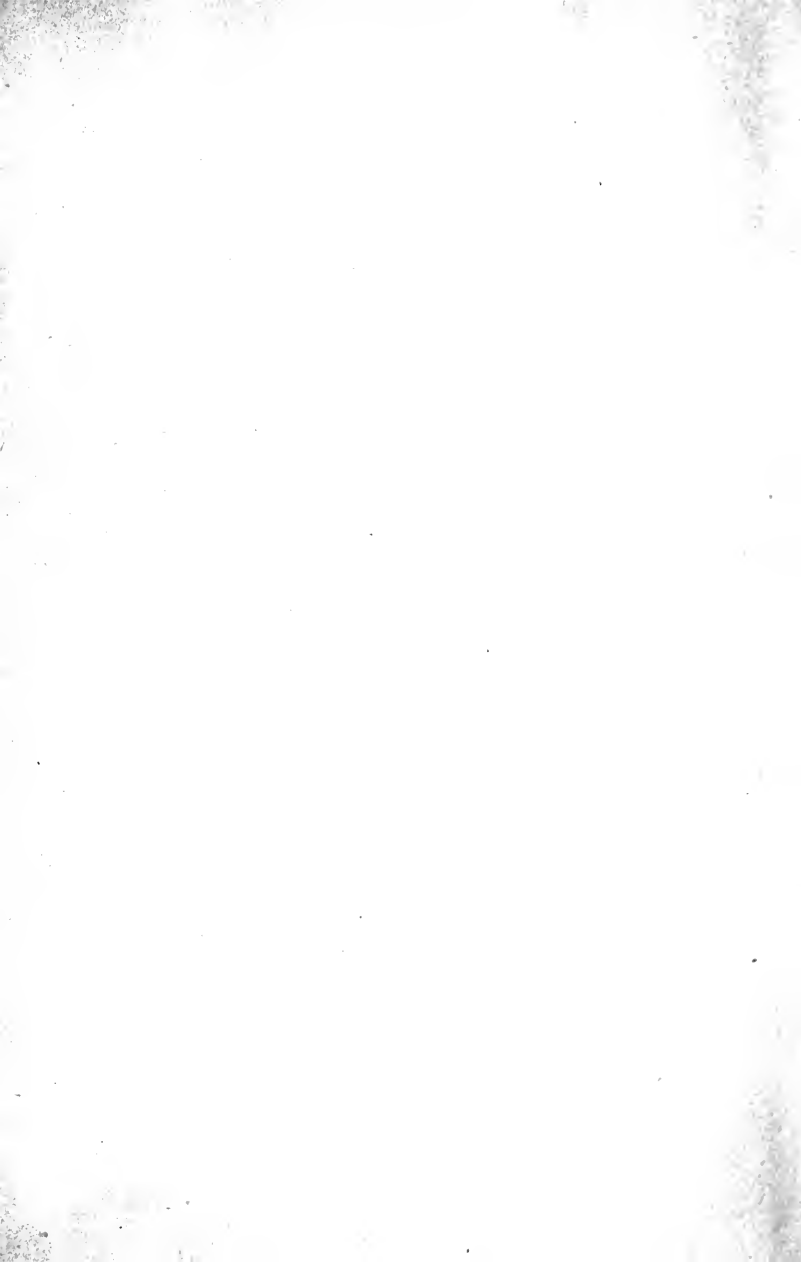
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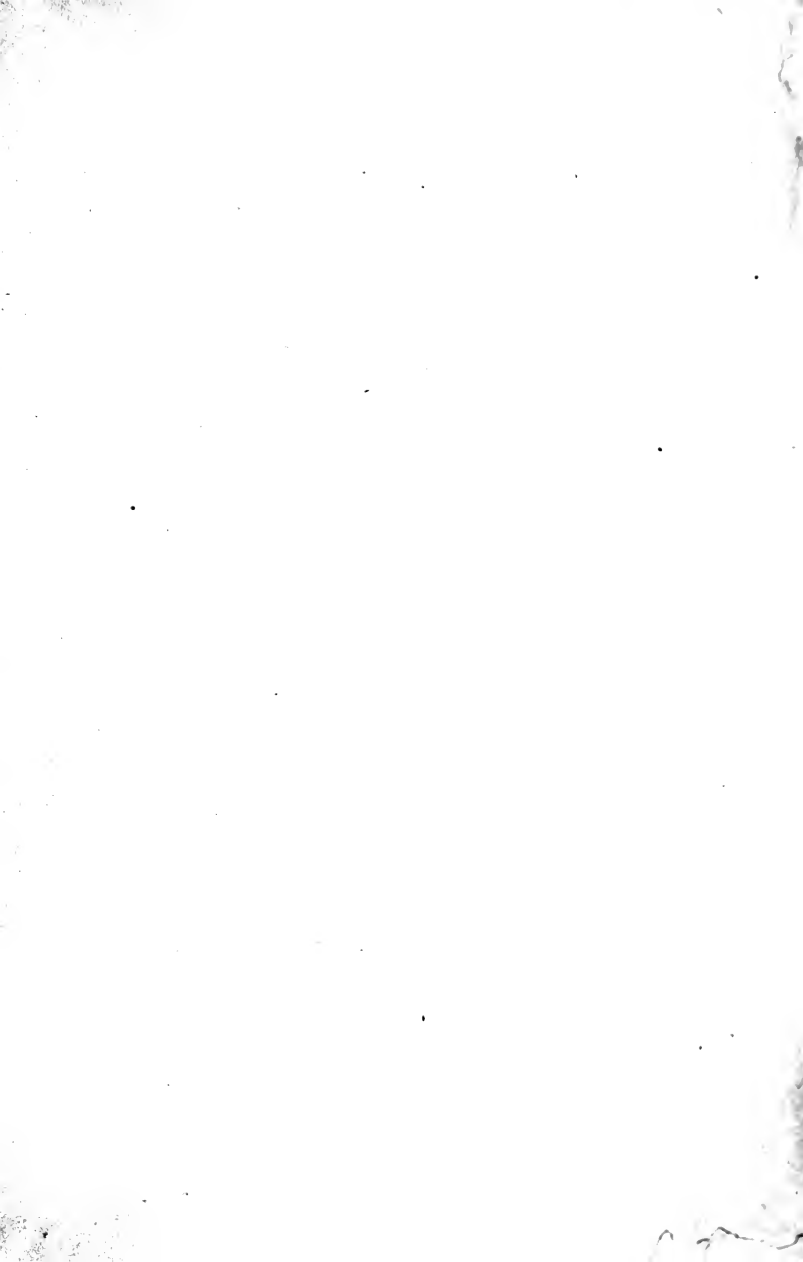






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